CINEMA QUARTERLY

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THE SPECTATOR

A YEAR ago *Cinema Quarterly* set out to articulate the desires of the new cinema audience, represented at the one end of the scale by those who appreciate such films as *Don Quixote*, *Maedchen in Uniform*, and *Kameradschaft*, and at the other by those who now go to the cinema to be impressed rather than entertained by films like *Cavalcade* and *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*. To a growing extent it has come to be a forum for the actual makers of films to discuss their problems and search out towards a true understanding of the fundamentals of cinema. In the present number Michael Balcon, who, as production chief of the Gaumont-British studios at Shepherds Bush, has done much to increase the prestige of British films, and John Grierson, whose contribution to documentary is well-known, discuss the function of the producer. In forthcoming numbers the entire structure of the film will be considered from every aspect, by the craftsman as well as by the theorist.

This does not mark a departure from our original policy. In using these pages for an analysis of their medium not only the film-makers will benefit. The spectator will gain an insight into the intricacies of production—the practical consideration of technicalities as well as the abstractions of technique—which will help him towards a fuller appreciation of the new art of the film, which demands both of creator and spectator a greater sensibility and a wider understanding than do any of the older arts. The spectator's point of view will continue to be expressed editorially, and in contributions from representative members of the new cinema public and from men and women distinguished in other spheres.

THE SUB-STANDARD FILM

THE IMPORTANCE of the development of sub-standard film in its various dimensions lies in two directions. On the one hand, though apparatus is admittedly still too dear for the man in the street, it allows the independent producer and groups to experiment along lines uninviting to the commercial film-maker. And on the other it solves, or can solve, the problem of repertory. If all the worthwhile films, after being fully exploited in the theatres, could be reduced to sub-standard dimensions it would be possible to form

private and public libraries, so that the student or any owner of a home projector could obtain and see films which are now finally inaccessible after their commercial exploitation. In education, and for propaganda and advertising, for which purposes sub-standard film is being increasingly used, television might conceivably limit its scope; but for the experimenter its value should remain, and in home projection its position ultimately would be analogous to that of the gramophone in relation to wireless.

It seems to have occurred to few people that the film, like the printed book, is a permanent record. Yet that is one of its main characteristics. That being so, it is reasonable that copies of films should be as readily accessible as books are. The Film Institute includes in its aims the preservation of important films, but if it could organise a scheme for the establishment of repertory film libraries, not necessarily under its own control, it would be doing a work of first-class importance.

EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTION

To CO-ORDINATE the efforts of those who are seriously engaged in the production of experimental, documentary, and educational films, either on standard or sub-standard apparatus, there has been formed the Independent Film-makers Association, with a board of advisers which includes Anthony Asquith, Andrew Buchanan, John Grierson, Stuart Legg, Paul Rotha, and Basil Wright. If this new and purposive Association can induce the amateur to use his camera to practical ends instead of in idle imitation of Hollywood it should have a considerable influence on the development of the sub-standard market. Its activities will be fully recorded in *Cinema Quarterly*, which will act as its official organ.

THE FILM INSTITUTE

THE SCHEME to form a national Film Institute has probably filled more space in the Press than the Loch Ness monster and the return of the "Ashes" combined, yet there are still countless queries as to the who, the what, and the why of the whole business. Behind the wordy barrage the promoters have gone steadily ahead with their plans, and the British Film Institute, less imposing perhaps than originally conceived, is finally in existence, if not yet operative. From certain quarters there has been all along frank criticism of the scheme, but the critics must now remain silent until it is seen what the new Institute can do, or at least until its plans for imme-

diate action are announced. It is hard to discover exactly what is expected of the Institute, either by the trade or the mixed public of bishops, aldermen, and schoolmasters who have made its establishment possible. It has asked for the co-operation of "all the various sections of the new film movement." Provided its directors display the imagination and leadership their position demands there is little doubt that this will be forthcoming in full measure.

Meanwhile, the film societies movement is steadily growing. Nearly every important city now has its organisation for the exhibition of Continental and artistic films not usually shown by commercial cinemas, and similar societies are now being formed even in quite small towns. A self-satisfied eclecticism may have animated the formation of some of these bodies, but more often the incitement has been a propagandist urge to arouse in others a realisation of the possibilities of the film as an art. The fact that many societies not only give private performances to their members, but support and encourage the public exhibition of worth-while films, organise children's matinées, form study circles and arrange lecture courses, possess libraries of books and stills, and even attempt production, shows the breadth of purpose dictating their activities and proves that they are alive to their responsibilities to the community.

OURSELVES

WITH THIS number *Cinema Quarterly* appears in a new format and at the reduced price of one shilling. This has been done to increase its effectiveness and to reach a still wider public. No apology is needed in asking readers to support this move by making the *Quarterly* known to others and by subscribing or placing a regular order through a bookseller. The friendly co-operation we have received from all quarters during our first year makes us confident that this request will not be made in vain.

Paul Rotha, who as the author of "The Film Till Now" and "Celluloid," needs no introduction to readers, has joined us as London Correspondent. Basil Wright, who acted in this capacity before making plans to go abroad, will continue to be closely associated with us and to contribute regularly.

Correspondents throughout the world will keep readers informed about current events and tendencies abroad to a fuller extent than formerly. Outstanding contributions to early issues will include articles by E. McKnight Kauffer, Ellen Wilkinson, Oliver Baldwin, and Philip Lindsay. For the rest—let this number speak for itself.

NORMAN WILSON.

THE FUNCTION OF THE PRODUCER

1. THE STUDIO PRODUCER

MICHAEL BALCON

Production Chief of the Gaumont-British Studios at Shepherds Bush

THE WORK of the film producer is to determine the choice of subjects, of directors, and of artistes, for every picture, and to decide the cost to be borne. Under his supervision director, scenario editor, and unit executives prepare the script, the plans of sets, and the time schedules for each production. When the film is in the making its daily progress is reported to him. He is the sponsor, and the guide, and the ultimate court of appeal.

A position of this sort, while not without its compensations, must inevitably have its full share of difficulties. The kind of energy which the producer must stimulate and direct is based upon the creative and artistic impulses of directors, writers, camera men, and artistes. Such impulses are so personal that they constantly require the close attention of one directing mind to blend them into the harmonious unity which is essential for any successful achievement in a form of entertainment which depends upon the specialised work of so many different hands.

The history of the cinema shows that every period of successful output is traceable to the producers who have had not only the good fortune to be able to surround themselves with first-rate executives, but who have also had the courage to trust implicitly in the genius of their chosen directors, technicians, and actors.

This division of labour, however, does not absolve him from his personal responsibility. In a large organisation the work of a producer is endless. He must be ceaselessly on the look-out for new ideas and and new methods, without for a moment relaxing his attention from the work in hand, whether it be in the embryo stage of a proposed

scenario, or whether it be the day's "rushes" of the half-dozen productions which are actually on the floor. Again, in a world where competition is so keen, and rivalry friendly or unfriendly is so strong, he must be constantly on his guard, so that his output is not overshadowed by that of others. He must aim all the while at thinking faster than his rivals.

No one realises more clearly than a producer that it is impossible to stand still, and in his efforts to bring something new to the screen he will, within the limits of his vision, see to it that this something new contains the vitalising germ of artistic imagination, of fresh uses of the camera, of a finer and more subtle portrayal of human activities and emotions.

But his judge is ultimately the man in the street. If the work he has been at such pains to accomplish does not please the public he will have failed. It will be useless for him to point out that the productions under his control are supreme works of art. It will not help him to argue that every film for which he has been responsible has shown one step further in the development of the cinema. Let us face the fact frankly. The cinema is an industry as well as an art. The buildings in which the films are made are regulated by the Factory Acts. In them are employed hundred of skilled workmen of every trade. Their output, therefore, will be governed by the conditions that affect every industry. They must find a ready market. Furthermore, as a source of employment, the film industry is a national asset, and the greater its success, the greater its national value. It can only achieve that success by turning out films that will not only repay the money spent on their production, but will also show sufficiently large profits to enable the producer to embark on more ambitious and therefore larger staffed undertakings.

This is not a defence of inartistic productions, nor is it a concession to a low standard of taste. It is just a reminder than the making of films does not go on in the garrets of starvation, where the geniuses of so many arts have eked out their existence to find recognition only after their death.

Whatever the rights or wrongs of the question may be, it is a fact that the cinema is part of the everyday life of more people that have ever read a line of Shakespeare or have ever heard the name of Blake. On the lines of the old parallel that the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link the enlightenment, the intelligence, and the artistic merit of the cinema are bound up with the capacity of its vast public to appreciate those qualities. All this, too, the producer must bear in mind.

It is good for him to have his critics. It is stimulating for him to receive chastisement from the impatient pens of those who are already sufficiently mentally advanced and artistically inspired to point

the way to greater beauty and to richer emotional values on the screen. But they must remember that he must walk in the company of those who are not yet able to run. For a man who, by virtue of his work, is in such close contact with the minds of a great mass of the community, there is no greater folly than to imagine that they are satisfied with just bread and circuses. But whatever he does, he must talk to them in their own language, and not in the language of the academy and of the lecture-room.

The producer, therefore, must remember that he is responsible to the company that employs him for keeping the balance between the industrial or commercial side of film making and the creative or artistic side.

The way of a producer, then, is not easy, and the qualities he must strive after are difficult to attain. The difficult ideal he must set himself is to be as absorbent as a sponge, as indulgent as a father, as hard as steel, and as patient as Job. In an art with unlimited possibilities inspiration may come even from the humblest sources. He can afford to neglect nothing. The material with which he works is not only human but is also artistic. To get the best out of the artist calls for a profound understanding of their psychology. There are times when he must give way, there are more frequent times when he must stand his ground, and he is never free from the necessity of calling upon an infinite resource of patience.

2. THE DOCUMENTARY PRODUCER

JOHN GRIERSON

Producer to the Empire Marketing Board throughout its career

THE PRODUCER'S function is to co-ordinate the more or less worldly intentions of backers with the more or less unworldly intentions of artists. He either finds the money for the artists or the artists for the money: differing in honour according to the direction from which he approaches. Sometimes, if he is ingenious, he carries the reputation among the artists of being an artist himself, and among the backers of being tougher than themselves. Sometimes—this is more frequent—he degenerates into a bully or a sycophant, sent by the money-grubbers to mangle and destroy every decent creative effort whatsoever. Sometimes he more blazingly constitutes himself a racketeer and defence organisation for the artists against the money-grubbers. At his best he is just a plain pandar, serving art as best

he can within the limits set by the high policy of his organisation. This is almost invariably a low policy.

In documentary there is this difference. The producer does not always serve purely commercial interests; unless, that is to say, you take the Marxian point of view, on which all service of the *status quo* is purely commercial. He can give himself the liberal satisfaction of serving such interests as education and national propaganda: which, on any sensible definition, is itself a species of education. Or the producer may act on behalf of a business concern, large enough in its operations and its outlook, to turn publicity into education, and propaganda into a work of development.

In these special fields the producer's function is that of any other head-master. If he does not himself teach, he sees to it that the parents are satisfied. The only difference in the analogy is that the parents in this case are sometimes too scared of films, or too eminently delighted with any and every film, or too eminently cocksure that they know everything about films. The gentry of the studios, like other criminals, have a simple criterion. They look at the balance sheet and sack accordingly. The gentry of education and propaganda face a balance sheet which can be defined in no such exact terms as are to be found in red columns and black. They have to decide not only about immediate effects in a classroom, but about long-range effects on a generation. They are, as a rule (and except for the eminently expert), satisfied with some such instruction as to "bring this, that, or the other thing alive." This is an ideal formula for a producer, and turns him into the knee-wife he ought to be. His main problem is to see that the director does bring this subject alive and not another. For directors tend to diverge.

But perhaps his functions are, in reality, more complicated. Documentary, or the creative treatment of actuality, is a new art with no such background in the story and the stage as the studio product so glibly possesses. Theory is important, experiment is important; and every development of technique or new mastery of theme has to be brought quickly into criticism. In that respect it is well that the producer should be a theorist: teaching and creating a style; stamping it, in greater or less degree, on all the work for which he is responsible.

Again, because documentary is new, the sponsors of propaganda and education have to be led gently to a knowledge of what is involved. They will instruct you, as like as not, to get a snap of this, add it to a snap of that, and finish triumphantly with a snap of something else; then wonder why the simple sequence which results is not the world-shaking work of art they intended. In that respect it is well that the producer should know how to talk soothingly to children and idiots.

And a third point. The subject matter for education and propaganda is seldom easy. You are not asked to look for the exciting bits and the exciting themes and shoot these. You are generally asked to hunt about in some seemingly dull subject and find a way of putting it on the screen. The producer's job is, by educational or sociological or other reference, to bring his director to the sticking point. This is the most fruitful part of his work, and is the highest justification of those sponsors of education and propaganda who might, on sloppier theories, be considered a plague to honest artists. It is they who force the pace of documentary cinema and extend its range by the very problems they set. Any fool can make exciting films about exciting things. It is they who, in the end, make documentarians. A producer will recognise this.

But only one thing gives the producer importance: the fact that he makes directors and, through directors, makes art. It is the only thing worth an artist's making: money not excepted. Directors can be no larger than the producer allows them to be, and their films no bigger (except by noble accident) than his own imagination permits. Handling, as he may do, men of different outlooks, different temperaments, he must often, like Chesterton's Knight, ride off in all directions. The feat is difficult but, on occasion, spectacular. It involves faith, hope, and charity for each of his directors, in different degrees; and all at the same time. The most important virtue of these is faith: which is to say, footage. The only secret of good results in documentary is that a director be permitted patience with his subject, and persistence. If these do not work once, you may try him again. You may even try him a third time. But you do not carry experiment to Biblical proportions. Round about the third time you decide you have been a bad producer in picking so bad a director. Or you decide he is a genius outside the scope of your imagination. You fire him, or fire yourself, according to your conscience.

ALEXANDER KORDA and the INTERNATIONAL FILM

In an Interview with

STEPHEN WATTS

IN THE midst of the most important forty-eight hours in his career since he became a film producer in Britain, Alexander Korda sat in his Mayfair office and talked to me about the international aspect of film-making.

The time and place were peculiarly appropriate. The previous evening I had stood by Korda's side in the Carlton Hotel while Douglas Fairbanks, senior, and his even more talented junior, discoursed on their plan to remain in Britain and make their future pictures in collaboration with the Korda organisation. They saw no reason why their locale should affect the world-wide appeal their work had enjoyed in the past, which meant that they were crediting Korda with the ability to turn out international films with a consistency never before attempted in this country.

Moreover, the elder Fairbanks made no secret of the fact that a preview of Korda's *chef d'œuvre*, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, had been the deciding factor in clinching his arrangements.

While we talked, Korda had many times to lift the telephone at his side and murmur responses to the verbal bouquets showering in on him from friends who had seen the first showing of the Laughton film the previous evening. Then that night, too, was of importance, because it was going to bring to light another aspect of Korda, the director, in the first screening of his Paris-made comedy, *The Girl from Maxim's*.

I said the place was appropriate to our subject. The office of London Film Productions might well be sub-titled "International House." I am credibly informed that eight languages are in current use among the personnel. From the German conversation between two members of the staff in an ante-room I passed in to be greeted in Hungarian-accented English by Korda, who sat speaking Italian into a telephone.

Looking at this pleasant, pale-complexioned young man in spectacles, it is difficult to believe that he made his first films in Hungary in the first years of the War.

"We did not think much about markets in those days," he said. "The director was usually quite out of touch with commercial considerations and simply made his picture as he saw it.

"Yet in a way that serves to illustrate the most important thing I have to say about what we call 'the international film.' We were Hungarians making Hungarian pictures for Hungarian people. But if we had made a notably good one—and if the world had been at peace—I believe it would have had an appeal anywhere. It would have been characteristically Hungarian and a good film—therefore it would have been international. But you must remember the times in which we were working then.

"The first thing to make me give conscious thought to the problem of international films was when a later film of mine, *The Prince and the Pauper*, made in Vienna, was shown in America. I believe it was the second European film to be seen out of Europe, the first being Lubitsch's *Madame du Barry*.

"Ever since then I have thought in terms of international films and no other. I might put it epigrammatically and say I believe that international films are what good directors make. And though I have made many bad films in my life I always hope to be a good director.

"But perhaps the phrase 'international film' is a little ambiguous. I do not mean that a film must try to suit the psychology and manners of every country in which it is going to be shown. On the contrary, to be really international a film must first of all be truly and intensely national. It must be true to the matter in it.

"The question of speech is not of much importance nowadays. Apart from the growth of multilingual versions, it has been demonstrated that really good films are recognised as such anywhere."

"But," I put in, "there is the question of humour, which is always raised when internationality of films is discussed. Do you think it is possible to have humour that will be understood and will draw laughs in all countries?"

"I think that within certain limitations that is possible," Korda replied. "The limitations are simply little things that any director feels by intuition or knows by experience should be avoided. For instance, while the English may always be relied upon to laugh at themselves—to respond to irony at the expense of the Englishman and his customs—it is useless to hope for a similar response in France by 'taking off' the French, however gently. They do not understand that type of humour. But, generally speaking, I think there are

THE COLOUR OF IT

PENNETHORNE HUGHES

THE MECHANISATION of entertainment increases constantly in scope and in detail. There are new "mediums" and new forms of these mediums. Usually both forms of novelty are greeted by the serious if rather ineffective criticism of disinterested authorities, as well as by the fulsome praises of their promoters; but one case, that of the colour film, has been overlooked by most of the critics. Dispirited, perhaps, by the odds of vulgarity against them, sober writers, despite the machine-gun rattle of advanced dilettantism, the intermittent thunder of literary disapproval, and the discovery by the Sunday newspapers that all that flickers is not gold, have never sufficiently considered the eligibility of this new commercial phenomenon, which is still seeking to smear the world with "All Colour" programmes. It is curious, because talk and colour in films are both aspects of the same increased realism of technique, and whilst one has been discussed *ad nauseam*, the other has been practically passed over. Yet whilst a properly comprehended and controlled colour process might conceivably have good qualities, the present injudicious monstrosities are as extravagantly unsatisfactory as the spate of inferior dialogue which produces such deserved storms of critical repulsion.

Colour in films is not really new. There was a luscious *Siege of Calais* before the War, and films like *The Glorious Adventure* and Fairbanks' *The Black Pirate* were often successful. For years, too, there have existed those parodies of Switzerland and the Rockies, in picture post-card polychromy, which represent a sentimental journey with a camera and a paint-box. Indeed, since the earliest days, most films have been uniformly tinted one shade or another. Cowboys pursued dusty romance against an appropriate yellow; Germans crowded epically upon a meditative grey, Frenchmen gesticulated patriotically through a haze of blue vignetting, and incendiaries internationally succeeded behind palls of luridly crimson

smoke. Individual producers, too, had their tonal prejudices, both before and after the introduction of panchromatic stock. But it was not enough. Now we have the final fling of generous showmanship, when numerous super-productions are afforded the full resources of an ill-assorted spectrum. These glories have long been confined to translated musical comedies, and so have merely emphasised blatancy instead of creating it. Indeed, a few scenes have been improved by colour, and there have been one or two interesting experiments, as, for instance, the coloured cartoon in the *King of Jazz* and the very successfully coloured Silly Symphonies.

Technical considerations are involved. Complete realism is impossible, for the colours of the theatre can be reproduced fairly satisfactorily, but the more subtle gradations of natural scenery cannot. Although this difficulty may be, perhaps is being, overcome, still it is surely commercial suicide to torture "fandom" and to alienate potential but sensitive film-goers with the crudely unintentional distortions of the moment? It is, indeed, doubtful whether man will ever be able physically to appreciate colour in motion, except in the most obvious masses. We can grasp form, and even form in motion, but it is extremely hard to enjoy the composition, as well as the literal content, of colour in motion. Indeed, most people, except the very sensitive or the very unsophisticated, find it more easy to understand even a painting in photographed reproduction than in the canvas. Our colour sense may be developing, our spectrum dividing, but until the retino-cerebral apparatus is far more advanced than it is at present, it is improbable that we shall sensually enjoy coloured films, except for their purely kaleidoscopic characteristics. The kaleidoscope is an abstract of great value as exercise to the æsthete and the technician, but it is training for a form of expression at present immensely difficult to appreciate. It is certainly not the preoccupation of the producers of super-films.

The manipulation of light and movement is, then, much better controlled in black and white, or any definite monochrome, than in imperfect if triumphant colours. The vociferous yearning for more patter and less art has not altogether deprived us of films with some intelligence of construction and precision of purpose, but these would soon be thinned even more drastically by the adoption of a universal system of colouring. Such a system must, at present, hide form and clarity, making the whole composition less exciting as a continuous pattern, and less convincing as a story, than it would otherwise have been. In fact, colour films are, at the moment, a pronounced mistake.

It is difficult, therefore, to account for the reticence of the more reputable authorities. Are they just frightened or tired, after the terrible hullabaloo about talkies, or suddenly unwilling to enter

into a discussion which must be profitless? For there cannot possibly be a lack of arguments. Recognised forms of monochrome art have always existed: sepia, etching, line drawing, and even sculpture. For coloured sculpture has achieved fashion rarely, and success hardly ever. (The Greeks are no help, as we cannot properly judge what their colours were like, and, at all events, there is the tattered argument of Greek colour blindness.) It is the monochrome forms that have been most easily realised, expressed, and probably understood. This does not, of course, constitute any final argument against the use of colour, but it does tritely underline the fact that the uncoloured fi m has a separate development no less obvious than the silent film. Even upon the lowest, the "escape" level of argument, consider the verisimilitudinous horrors of dirty reds and foggy yellows. The magnates should beware.

This is only the fringe of an argument about which technicians, cineastes, symposial celebrities, and correspondence columnists will in time clamour in earnest conviction and bad journalism. Only it *is* strange that they have been so long in starting, and it *is* desirable that those sincerely interested in the intelligent cinema should consider the æsthetic appropriateness of colour-films before it is too late.

THE FILM IN EDUCATION

THE SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL CINEMA SOCIETY—founded in 1929, with headquarters in Glasgow—has done much experimental and propaganda work in the educational film sphere. Though the classroom film in its varied aspects has been extensively discussed at winter session lectures, the society has been distinguished rather by its practical approach to a problem already somewhat overburdened by investigation. Special classroom films have been prepared and exhibited in Glasgow schools, and the Committee is at present engaged on a scheme of film work which covers the geography of Scotland. During the summer, J. C. Elder, founder of the Society, toured Scotland with a cameraman and covered some three thousand miles in search of material for the *Ideal Cinemagazine* and the *Gaumont Sound Mirror*, much of which will also be used for classroom films. Among the other activities of an enterprising society is the organisation of special matinées for children. The annual subscription is 2s. 6d., and the Hon. Sec. is D. Fraser, 129 Bath Street, Glasgow.

A WORKING PLAN FOR SUB-STANDARD

"EMBFU"

I USE this title because sub-standard production has been too exclusively associated with leisure: with summertime glimpses of children digging in sand pits and other domestic, or would-be domestic, felicities of the personal life. Much of the product of amateur groups, if better in technical degree, belongs to the same category of leisure-time activity. The felicities in this case are the slightly more public, but still very local, felicities of charade. The participants, more often than not, are simply having a good clean time together: seeing themselves act. They are not doing anything especially purposive with their films.

The Preston Film Society made a good little film about electricity a year ago for the local electricity people. The Edinburgh Guild has made a 16 mm. short, with the civic intention of bringing Edinburgh alive. These cases are exceptions. The majority have been pottering about with comedies and dramas, which could not, of course, have any hope of audience outside the family circle.

Some of you may wish to qualify this description of amateur intention, for the phrase "experimental cinema" is often used for these efforts. The suggestion is that behind amateur work there is sometimes the high ambition of making works of art. I think not often, or there would be more documentaries among the amateurs and fewer dramas. By the very nature of the case, the necessary limitations of amateur work (the lack of studio, laboratory, not to mention thespian facilities) make the studio grade far more difficult than the documentary grade. And there is good reason to believe that if the intention were really experimental the amateurs would choose that particular field in which experiment is a practical possibility. We must conclude that the amateurs have been playing themselves.

All this is very well, and I do not raise the matter in a spirit of objection. Cinema, if inferior to golf, is as fair and expensive a way as most of spending Saturday afternoons. It is true, however, that many amateurs would welcome an opportunity of turning their film sense to public uses: and it must be the first job of any movement in the 16 mm. field to outline these public uses and organise their service. This is the thesis of the present article.

Serving a definite end is, among other things, a very important incentive in the making of films: far more important than the vague and almost always false incentive of "making art." It is a good practical axiom that art is never to be got by direct pursuit. It is a trophy obtained, by the grace of one or other of the gods, in the fervent pursuit of something else. In any case, the definite end is a salutary discipline. It dictates the theme. It dictates the treatment. It dictates lucidity and length. It provides an audience and, generally, a critical audience. For all these gifts the amateur should be grateful.

There are two other very important considerations. The definite end may also supply the cash, as happened with the Preston Film Society, the Glasgow educational group, and, I believe, with one of the efforts of the Edinburgh Film Guild. There are other examples to be found in the technical colleges, research laboratories, and the mines and factories. Amateur work has, in such cases, been put on an economic basis. The second important consideration is that the definite end gives amateur film production a growing point. It ties it up with the life of the community and gives it status as a social activity. It supplies the continuing support necessary to development.

Inspiration (continuing inspiration), regarding theme and treatment are not associates, on the more romantic theories, with the cold-blooded purposes of a public end; but, on any evidence, you will find it so. Art, or call it creation, generally involves a mastery of raw material and there is nothing like having the raw material forced upon it. It is then that the imagination has to dig in and find things; and there is no better way of discovering that element of surprise (miracle, call it) which is a necessary quality of art than by taking it from what seems unpromising material.

Anyone knows that birds, trees, hills, lakes, sunsets, etc., are good-looking, and any moron exposing at five-six with a K2 will say as much as need be said about them. But to dive into a factory, or dive into a slum, is a more adventurous business. And to make a good clean job of a teaching film on the Southern Uplands of Scotland is a more adventurous business still. Just to select those twenty or thirty or fifty shots from all the activities involved which will say your say about it, and make it an analytical or poetic or dramatic say, is something that no one has done before you.

Marlene Dietrich as the cabaret singer in "The Song of Songs," a Paramount production, directed by Rouben Mamoulian.

Jessie Mathews in "Friday the Thirteenth," a forthcoming Gainsborough picture, directed by Victor Saville.

You are not asked to seek difficulty for the sake of difficulty or to despise the good subjects which lie to hand. Even the easier and more romantic subjects (spring on the hills, for example) will bear a new and fresh description. The main point is that amateurs should not be ashamed of the subjects which educational or industrial or civic or other propaganda organisations are liable to present to them. It is good to remember that Leonardo, Michelangelo, and El Greco were all paid propagandists.

A consequence of this argument is that purposive amateurs should devote themselves to documentary and be done with it. That is where the educational and propaganda work lies; and, as already suggested, that is where amateur work is likely to find its highest level.

For the sake of convenience it is good to remember the main divisions of documentary work. There are three schools. The first is the newsreel or popular journalist school. It calls its pictures "interest" pictures, because it only takes from the subject what it knows (and any fool will agree) to be interesting. If in the village of Cuckold's Green the parson's whiskers are six inches longer than any other parson's, and the village idiot can waggle his ears faster and wider than any other village idiot, that is its sufficient gambit for a description of English village life. In its more soulful moments it takes to scenics and conjures ham and egg effects from sunsets: red filter, F8 or thereabouts. The second school is the Flaherty school, a deeper affair altogether. It is exotic in its material. It is concerned with native life, native manners, native philosophies, but only with natives who wander on halcyon isles or battle against epic horizons. It does not regard the unemployed of Coatbridge as natives. If it impinges on the modern school it is in *recherche du temps perdu*. It will teach you all you need to know about shooting the simpler communities, and will tell you better than any how to make natural phenomena drape themselves into a continuing story. The third school is represented by Wertov and Turin in Russia, Ruttman in Germany, Ivens in Holland, and by the E.M.B. group and Rotha in Britain. It deals entirely with industrial and modern material. All its films are made under educational or propaganda auspices, and are so financed. Its method of treatment varies. It is sometimes impressionist, sometimes symphonic, sometimes analytical; but it avoids both the personal story and the discursive. It is concerned to build up mass descriptions and build a theme out of its sequence of mass descriptions. On the technical side it deals in tempos, rhythms, images. Deprived of the journalistic reference of the newsreel method and the romantic appeal of the Flaherty method, it is concerned to find the sociological implications of its subject matter.

Amateurs should master carefully the theories of the different schools. They will provide a necessary academic grounding and prevent a great deal of lost labour and enthusiasm. In so far as amateur work is directed to public uses, the Flaherty example will be found useful in some cases (for Travel Association purposes, for example); but in the main the modern school will be found more useful. Here you must watch carefully, for these tempos and rhythms and things are all too theoretically fascinating and at the level of discussion all too "arty" for practical guidance. They may easily land you in abstract sequences which are anything but purposive in their total effect. They are, after all, only the means by which you make your material interesting: they do not of themselves create a theme or story for that material. Even in documentary the play's the thing. Or, as the case may be, the lesson, the message, is the thing. Indeed there is now some considerable sign that the more complex documentary effects (as in *Berlin*, for example) are passing out of favour. A simpler, quieter, less "musical" and more purposive treatment is taking its place.

Where the tale is a simple one, better tell it and let the effects look after themselves, and not vice versa. This will both recommend you to your educational or industrial or civic sponsors and give you a first right step towards effective work. Amateurs, when they are ambitious, tend to be too ambitious by half. When they turn professional, it takes two years to de-theorise and decomplicate them. They are too proud to be simple. This is spoken from laborious experience.

Such advice in hand, what are the direct possibilities? In the first place, there is a vast "bringing alive" service to be performed: a very valuable line of approach to development associations, city councils, steamship companies, travel associations. They all want to see their particular blob of territory alive and kicking on the screen, and there is no reason why the amateurs should not do it for them. They can do it cheaper than professionals and may often, with local knowledge, local enthusiasm, and a higher critical understanding of cinema, do it better. Many sections of the country: villages, counties, industrial communities, seaside resorts, stretches of mountain and coast, hiking circuits, have their descriptive story to tell; and there are traders' organisations, civic organisations, to whose interest it is that the story should be told. The rest is a matter of business, and every amateur group should have a member who can do business. The number of 16 mm. projectors in schools and lecture organisations of all kinds will indicate the growing audience available for this type of material. *It may even be shot on* 35 *for the wider audience* 35 *mm. commands*; 35 *can always be reduced for* 16 *mm. circulation.*

The educational service is an even more promising service and one I recommend very strongly to any amateur group with a sprinkling of pedagogic membership. It has present examples in the work at Altrincham under Gow and at Glasgow under the Director of Education, with J. C. Elder in charge of practicals. The Glasgow amateur group has set itself a programme of teaching films for the Glasgow curriculum, joining up thereby their film work with their professional work. Every other major educational authority requires a similar scheme, and amateur groups should press themselves into their service. Curricula differ across the country, and it is good that they should. Indeed, no matter what films are forthcoming from London libraries they cannot hope to fulfil local requirements. Directors of education are sensitive on this point and will listen to you. Be careful, however, to concentrate on local requirements, or you may be cutting across the production plans of the production centres in London which will, necessarily, be dealing with the wider themes. The educational film field cannot yet afford any tendency to overlapping.

A third line of approach will be found in connection with local hospitals and departments of public health. The churches and Y.M.C.A.s with their various youth services and women's services will suggest still another line. The publicity required by industrial concerns, both inside and outside the factories, suggests yet another. There is really no limit to the clients available to 16 mm. groups, if they will but switch their attention to the many possibilities inside educational and social work.

Only one warning is necessary. They will have to prove the availability of an audience, before they can raise money for their efforts. In the educational field, and in cases where films are made for use by salesmen or for showing to employees, there is, of course, no difficulty. In other cases the 16 mm. groups will have to indicate distribution either through existing libraries, or through their own central organisation. There is every sign in London that, if the films are available, audiences will be found on a national scale. Audiences on local scale can be left to the devices of the local groups. They will not have learned their job as film people, if they cannot publicise their wares.

THE FILM ABROAD

FRENCH MOVIE TO-DAY

D. F. TAYLOR

THE INFLUENCE of the stage lies heavy on French movie. In no country, save perhaps Japan, are the traditions and practice of the stage so deeply embedded in the producer's mind. With what gusto they announce an actor who is from the *Comédie Francaise*! The music-hall also has a considerable influence, and the Leslie Fuller and Ernest Lotinga tradition is very closely paralleled in the French programme picture. Technically, however, they are far behind Britain. Cutting is even less appreciated at Joinville than at Elstree. The tempo of films is dull and demonstrates a lack of movie sense. The stage has had its influence in a superabundance of dialogue. A shot of five hundred feet, in which the confines of the screen become the sides of a stage, is not uncommon. But in set design, and costume they excel, and though the stories are bad and the method of telling them crude, there is very rarely anything offensive to eye or ear. The French have a greater sensibility than any other nation. Certainly their artistic sense is much better developed. Perhaps the roots of this can be found in the higher standard of education.

The experimental cinema that was such a vital and interesting part of French movie has almost passed away. The men who thrilled the days of our film adolescence with *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *En Rade*, *La Petite Lise*, *Jeanne d'Arc*, *Le chien Andalou*—where are they now? . . . The *ci-devant* intellectuals have sold their souls down the Champs Elysées. Cavalcanti, Dréville, Feyder, Epstein, L'Herbier, are all working in the factories at Joinville turning out the programme picture. The only one who has carried any of his virtues to Joinville is Epstein, the erstwhile protagonist of French documentary. His last film shown publicly, *Hispano*, did show some feeling for people and a nice sense of timing. He managed to obtrude a lighthouse to give it the Epstein signature. Cavalcanti is making *Coralle et Cie*, in

which Catherine Hessling has a small part. Jean Dréville, documentary producer, turns *Trois per cent*. Eugene Deslaw, one of the earliest abstract film-makers, is among the few who have resisted the lure of the Big Time. He is making a documentary of *La Cité Universitaire*. In an interview he said: "I was tired of the world, with its depressions and crises. It held no hope. But here among the young students I have found gaiety, health, and optimism, a belief in ideals. That is the spirit of my film." It will carry neither dialogue nor spoken commentary. Titles will be used with a musical commentary, a synthesis of national songs typifying the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this university.

René Clair, silent for so long, has been working on a shooting script for a new film based on his own story. Conditions of the story and the wishes of Tobis decided the making of the picture in Berlin. Unfortunately under the Nazi regime certain regulations had to be complied with and Clair was asked to make modifications to the film. He refused, and temporarily the film has been shelved. In an interview with *Comœdia*, Douglas Fairbanks said that he hoped Clair would direct a picture for his new company. Nothing has developed, and Clair is still idle. It is difficult to assess his position to-day. Over a year has passed since *A Nous la Liberté*. In that film he demonstrated his lack of social consciousness and his inability to face a social problem. Instead he produced a vague Rousseauesque philosophy. Unless Clair can show us that he is willing to tackle social themes, his films will remain as they always have been, pleasant exercises in movie technique. *Sous les Toits de Paris* was his best film, because he was definitely interested in the lives of people at that time. Unquestionably he is the best producer in France, but we want to know how he is facing up to the new problems, what use he is making of new ideas, and most importantly, whether he will remain a producer of burlesque and musical comedy or whether he has the courage to face movie themes.

The most sizeable figure working in France to-day is V. I. Tourjansky. You will remember him as an unambitious producer of such pictures as *Volga-Volga* and *The White Devil*. He has learnt a lot since then and his latest picture, *L'Ordannance*, puts him in the front rank. It is adapted from a de Maupassant story and has been directed with a magnificent economy of shots giving it the starkness of real drama. In the middle the film tends to lose balance, too much emphasis being laid on matters immaterial to the logical development of the story. Music has been very skilfully woven into the film in a symbolic but never obtrusive fashion. Tourjansky will do even bigger things when he ceases to use his camera truck in a pointless manner and when he can curb his embarrassing tendency to overemphasise the mood of a scene with symbolical settings. The

period is about the time of *Nana*, an atmosphere the French know so well how to recreate. Miss Cohen of the Academy tells me it may be shown in England. It is the best sound film exposition of the naturalistic approach to cinema.

The Nazi persecution of the German film producers is likely to benefit the French cinema. Lang, Pommer, Pabst, Ophuls, and a host of others are working in Paris. It is too early yet to see any of the films they are making, but the grafting of German technique on the French school will certainly create films of interest. The introduction of the German technicians will undoubtedly improve the technical deficiences of the French cinema. How the film melting-pot will assimilate the French *esprit* and the German soul exploration is a matter for conjecture. Preserve us from introspective musicals or comedies of the subconscious!

AMERICA

LEWIS JACOBS, who already has to his credit *Mobile Composition*, *Commercial Medley*, and a four-reel documentary of the Southern States, has now completed *City Block*, which is described as "a film of violence." It is a close-up of a metropolitan block emphasising cinematic technique rather than photographic quality. Sound is used in counterpoint to image and not as exposition. The content is entirely documentary. All sorts of ruses were resorted to in order to photograph the people without their knowledge. A naturalness and naïvete, which can only be achieved in this way, is the result.

AN INTIMATE little cinema, seating 280, luxuriously furnished and decorated in the modern manner, is about to be opened in Baltimore by Hermann G. Weinberg, whose policy is to show only European films and those American films which because of their artistic merit (when they occur!) cannot get a release through the larger houses. Among the films it is hoped to show during 1933–34 are *Atlantide*, *Don Quixote*, *Mirage de Paris*, *M*, *Poil de Carotte*, *The Merry Monarch*, *Ariane*, *A Nous la Liberté*, *July 14*, *Fin du Monde*, and *The Deserter*.

PRIOR to *The Face of New England*, Henwar Radakiewicz made two films: *The Barge*, a documentary, shot entirely on a tugboat; and *Portrait of the Artist*, also a documentary. In both of these, Radakiewicz achieved striking photographic effects. *The Face of New England* furthers the melodramatic quality of his photography. The film is divided into four moods: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. The particular atmosphere and detail of New England environs is inter-

preted in its seasonal flux. Radakiewicz works with great patience to obtain exact photographic values. Almost a full year has been spent on the picture and only half of it has been completed. If it is mounted as well as it is photographed, *The Face of New England* will undoubtedly be an important contribution to film art.

LEWIS JACOBS.

GERMANY

THE GERMAN cinema as the world knew it can no longer be said to exist. The studios have been "purged" of "non-Aryans" and those who do not support the Nazi regime, and such international figures as Erich Pommer, G. W. Pabst, Joe May, Paul Czinner, and Fritz Lang, are now in exile. Others, such as Emil Jannings, Werner Krauss, Marlene Dietrich, and Lilian Harvey are at present abroad and are likely to be affected by a new decree which will exclude from working in Germany all who make contracts to go abroad or who renew their present contracts outside of Germany—thereby "retarding the work of cultural reconstruction."

THE NEW German films are undisguised Nazi propaganda. *Horst Wessel* glorifies the achievement of a Nazi student who was killed by Communists in 1930 and has since been made something of a national hero, while *S.A.—Mann Brand*, which undoubtedly has considerable entertainment value, shows the Communists, characterised as Jews, as the enemy of the people, represented by the Storm Troops. *Fugitives*, directed by Gustav Ucicky, is an attack on Bolshevism and deals with the fate of the Volga Germans who fled out of Russia at the Revolution.

BELGIUM

GERMAINE DULAC, well-known as a producer of *avant garde* films, is now Art Manager of Gaumont News Reel, of which there is a Belgian supplement. Charles de Keukelaire, director of *Combat de Boxe* and *Lourdes*, is in charge of the photography.

MAURICE DEMBRAIN has made a folklore film of the Ath Fair—*La Danse des Géants*—which endeavours to bring out the curious rhythm of the popular feasts and the reaction they create on the people. The Belgian cinema appears to be turning in a decidedly national direction.

L. P.

MISCELLANY

ADAPTATION: AN EXAMPLE

CLIFFORD LEECH

WHEN *The Merry Monarch* was withdrawn from the London Empire after one day's showing, the blame was thrown on the sedulity of Mr. Shortt. No doubt the English copy suffered from his attentions, yet there was in it so much falseness and stupidity that we must be allowed to question whether the original had ever anything more to recommend it than an intermittently pleasant air of bawdry.

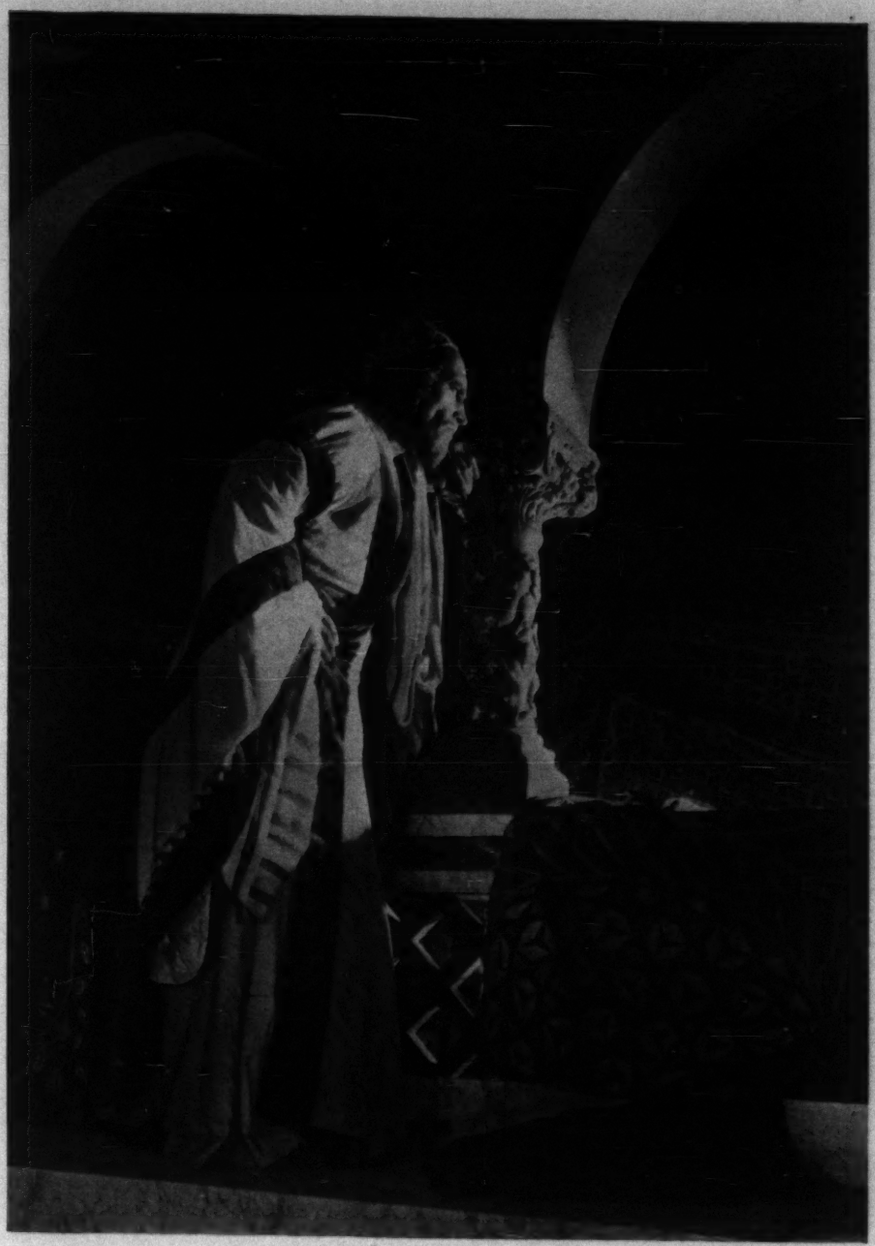
Pierre Louys' novel, *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole*, introduces us to the country of Tryphème, where complete sexual liberty is established. King Pausole, however, is a prey to indecision, and has therefore assigned the control of his household to the puritanical Taxis. The story tells how the Princess Aline leaves the court with Mirabelle, a Lesbian, and how Pausole sets forth in search of her. The rule of Taxis is successfully challenged by the page, Giglio, and Pausole is at last convinced that freedom must be the property even of his wives and daughter.

The novel has its niche in literature as a picture of licentiousness carried to its logical conclusion and as a setting for the genuinely and humanly amusing character of Pausole. The film of *The Merry Monarch* has neither logic nor characterisation. It is worth considering here only because of its "artistic" pretensions.

Four notable changes are made in the screen translation:

(1) Mirabelle is, inevitably, no longer a Lesbian; yet she unnecessarily appears on about three occasions. There are other discrepancies of this kind, and at least one serious gap in the narrative. Presumably the censor has been at work, but if the film were deemed worth showing in its cut version, then it would also have been worth while to refashion it as a coherent unity.

(2) Giglio has become an aviator who discovers the land of Tryphème. This was a happy invention, for it could make him a



Conrad Veidt in the "Wandering Jew,"
a Twickenham Films production.
Still photograph by Cyril Stanborough.

Anna Neagle in "Bitter Sweet," a British and Dominions screen version of Noel Coward's play, directed by Herbert Wilcox. The film is notable tor the photography of Fred Young and the set design of L. P. Williams.

representative of the audience, delighted with the principles of this new country, and demanding that they should be universally applied. His character, however, is ruined by the attempted serious delineation of his love affair with Aline.

(3) At the end of the film, Pausole announces his conversion to monogamy through the ministrations of Queen Diane! (This is after Pausole and Diane have been lost at sea, being unable to locate Tryphème because it does not appear on any of the world's maps. An interesting addition, but introduced and disposed of far too perfunctorily.)

(4) The indecision at the basis of Pausole's character is nowhere hinted at, and the domination of Taxis becomes immediately ridiculous. The king of *The Merry Monarch* is merely a *bon viveur*; the king of *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole* is the one character in the book who is created in the reader's own image. The puppet-performances that come from English and American, and now German, studios make us more than ever willing to see a film of human character. Here was a great opportunity.

For the last three of these changes the censor cannot be held responsible.

The Merry Monarch has been praised for the agreeable patterns of its camera-work, but the director has apparently no eye for significant detail. His obtuseness in this respect is revealed notably in the flat filming of the ballet: not a single detail is brought out by camera position or angle. An attention to significant detail, however, presupposes a respect for one's subject-matter. And it seems impossible that anyone could feel respect for the mixture of crudity and conventionality that is *The Merry Monarch*.

THE POET AND THE FILM

G. F. DALTON

I SHOULD be very grateful to Herbert Read for a little further explanation of some points in his article, "The Poet and the Film."* In the first place, I am not quite sure what he means by the word "poet." In one context it seems to have its original sense of "maker" or creative artist in general; in another it seemes to be confined to those who compose verse. This ambiguity has an important effect on Mr. Read's conclusion, "The film of imagination . . . will not come until the poet enters the studio." If he uses the word "poet"

* *Cinema Quarterly*, Summer 1933.

in its first meaning, this sentence is reduced to, "The film of imagination will not come until creative imagination is used in its making," which is very nearly a truism. If by "poet" he means the maker of verse, or even of literature generally, several other interesting points are raised.

There seems to be no particular reason why the sentence quoted above should not run, "The film of imagination will not come until the musician enters the studio"; or the painter; or the sculptor. Mr. Read says that literature is visual; but is not this at least equally the case with painting and sculpture?

But let us examine this contention a little more closely. Mr. Read says that the "single aim" of literature is "to convey images by means of words." In that case, other things being equal, the more clearly and accurately the visual image is expressed, the better is the description as literature. This is a rather remarkable conclusion. Thus, for example, when Milton wrote, "On his crest sat horror plumed, nor wanted in his grasp what seemed both spear and shield," he was writing very bad poetry, for he described things quite impossible to visualise. Thus, numerous sonnets of Shakespeare, large parts of Milton and Wordsworth, and many others, are not poetry at all, for they make no attempt at all to convey images, but are concerned with reflection or philosophy. Thus, Walter de la Mare, when he wrote, "Dusk on the windless casement weaves a labyrinth of flowers," would have been much better advised to express himself in some such manner as this: "C.U. of the casement from inside. Dusk is falling outside, and the evening is perfectly calm. In speeded-up motion, frost-patterns (back-lit by the remains of light outside) appear on the window-panes."

At this point Mr. Read will doubtless interpose that, although my scene from an imaginary film scenario is clear and accurate, it is not vivid; it does not immediately call up in the mind the image it describes, but the mind has, of its own volition and with some effort, to construct the image. To this I reply that vividness is not its business; and, therefore, that even according to Mr. Read's definition the scenario is not literature. But if the scenario is not literature, how can the film have any connection with literature? "To convey images," according to Mr. Read, is the object of literature; it is also, in a somewhat different sense, the object of the scenario; but it is certainly not the object of the film. The film *is* the images, and they stand in need of no conveyance except a purely physical one. If literature uses words to convey images, the film uses images to convey whatever lies behind them. But in that case the conveyance of images is not an end in itself, and therefore literature is merely the film at second-hand.

According to Mr. Read's definition, then, it seems that Homer

and Shakespeare and all the rest have been merely composing scenarios for unproduced films, and that the invention of the film camera must eventually abolish literature altogether. This seems to me to be an unsatisfactory position.

Another point on which I would welcome a little further enlightenment is his definition of technique. Beethoven began composing at the age of eleven, and his technique, according to all the best authorities, was continually progressing up to within a few years of his death. But Mr. Read says that most techniques can be learnt in a few days, or at most in a year or two. We can hardly assume that Beethoven was unusually slow-witted, so that Mr. Read must be using the word "technique" in a different sense. Indeed, this must be so, for he speaks as if there was only one technique for each art. Yet one says, for example, that Manet's technique differs from Picasso's, as if each artist had a technique of his own. I should be greatly obliged to Mr. Read if he would assist me here. But in any case, Mr. Read's statement that "no amount of technical efficiency will create a work of art if the imaginative genius is lacking," proves nothing; for it is equally true that no amount of imaginative genius will create a work of art if the technical efficiency is lacking.

With the exception of these few points I am in complete agreement with Mr. Read's article.

HERBERT READ REPLIES

I AM very grateful to Mr. Dalton for giving me an opportunity of making myself clearer on one or two points in my rather impromptu article on "The Poet and the Film"—it was originally delivered as a speech. I do, of course, use "poet" in the wider sense, and not merely as a maker of verse. This may reduce my observation to a truism, but I think there is a distinction to be made between poetic imagination or fancy and what I would call prosaic ingenuity or invention, and my only purpose in using the rather doubtful word "creative" was to imply this distinction. Once that distinction is admitted, I think there is some sense in saying that "the film of imagination . . . will not come until the poet enters the studio."

As for the next point, I confess that the word "single" is unfortunate. What I should have written was "primary" or "elementary." The elementary aim of writing is to convey images, and this elementary aim remains a very essential one—even in verse, where so many other complications enter into the question, including not only verbal music but even legitimate effects of confused imagery, as in Milton's metaphor. Just as poetry has elaborated this

elementary aim during the many centuries of its development, so, no doubt, the film will elaborate its elementary aim—which is, nevertheless, still the same as the aim of poetry—to convey images, but by visual and not aural means. The distinction Mr. Dalton tries to draw between the scenario and the film is surely irrelevant, as though we were to try and distinguish between the words of the poem and the images they express.

I am not so sure that Homer and Shakespeare and all the rest did not compose scenarios for unproduced films, but the fact that their scenarios are, incidentally, literature should relieve Mr. Dalton of any anxiety he feels for the future of literature.

My remarks on technique were perhaps a little extreme, but I did guard myself by saying "most" techniques, and whilst that might include everything, from learning to ride a bicycle to producing a film, it might still exclude Beethoven. The sense in which I use the word "technique" is the strict one. To speak of Manet's technique as differing from Picasso's, or of each painter having a technique of his own, is merely an inexact use of the word. In such cases it is not the technique that differs, but the use made of it.

CINEMA'S INFLUENCE ON PHOTOGRAPHY

"THE MOVIES," says E. O. Hoppé, in his introduction to *Modern Photography* 1933–34 (London: Studio. 7s. 6d.), "have saved photography in spite of itself!" Bromoil, gum-platinum, soft-focus, and all the technique imitative of the painter's art have vanished. At last the legitimate sphere of photography has been recognised, and the current volume is exciting evidence of the vigour and effectiveness of pure photography. The camera eye differs from the human both in range of vision and mensuration of perspective, and it is the exploitation of these differences in revealing the hidden beauty of the commonplace that gives the new realism its artistic authenticity. Imagism, mastery of technique, and absence of sentimentalism are the keynotes of the collection, which contains examples from all over the world. Can it be a still latent sentimentalism, however, which prolongs the life of the professional model and the carefully posed "artistic studies in the nude" which appear even in this volume?

Though beautifully produced with the Studio's customary care, it is a pity all the photographs did not receive the full value of black and white instead of being printed in various tints.

N. W.

FILMS OF THE QUARTER

FORSYTH HARDY

FOR THE first time, it seems, British production is the most interesting and important of the quarter. Alike in promise and performance the news is imposing. Douglas Fairbanks has decided to make London his headquarters for future film production and his move, which is to be followed by other notable screen personalities, is a further indication of the decline of Hollywood and the growing importance of Britain as a world film centre. The films to be produced in this country in alliance with London Film Productions and distributed in America through United Artists will inevitably add to the prestige of the British film abroad. There is great promise also in the new Gaumont-British programme: *Red Ensign*, a story of the shipyards, is being designed as a tribute to the Merchant Service; *Northbound* is to describe the life of the men who sail in the Arctic; *Cecil Rhodes* will give an impression of Empire building; *Men Without Work* will, plainly, have a social theme; and *Mary Queen of Scots* will make an interesting contribution to the growing group of historical pictures. With projects such as these announced, the progress of the British film becomes something to be followed with lively expectation.

In performance also Britain's record is worthy of more note than usual. Victor Saville's *I Was a Spy* and Alexander Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII* are definite achievements. In addition to the latter film, Korda has made *The Girl from Maxim's*, a witty adaptation of a lighthearted French farce, with lovely photography by Georges Périnal. *Bitter Sweet*, while not adding anything to the stage version, is distinguished by its pictorial quality and its sense of showmanship. And the growing enterprise of British producers is represented by *The Fire Raisers* by Michael Powell, brought to the screen while its theme is still front page news.

Two film cycles have developed during the quarter. There has been a tendency in the studios to look backward into history for film themes. In addition to *Henry VIII* we have seen *Voltaire*, a film innocent of real historical sense and interesting only for the performance of George Arliss; and we are promised, among others, *Mary Queen of Scots*, *Catherine the Great*, *Queen Christina*, *Napoleon*, and *Nell Gwynne*. If all of those pictures are as sincere and successful as the *Henry VIII* film cinemas will benefit in colour and glamour from this renewed interest in the past. A cycle of movie-revues which opened with the excellent *Forty-Second Street* has continued with *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Moonlight and Melody*, and others are in production. There is a regrettable tendency in these new movie-revues to make capital of the depression. Two of them are almost identical in their final numbers, and both, with equal lack of taste, have the American unemployed worker and the "bread line" as their theme. One is called *Dusty Feet* and the other *Forgotten Man*.

America's cinema of the quarter has followed familiar lines. *Dinner at Eight* and *Tugboat Annie* are exaggerated products of the star system. *Another Language* and *Accidents Wanted* reveal a continued dependance on the stage for material. *Song of the Eagle*, *The Mayor of Hell*, and *The Stranger's Return* are variously typical of the American movie's close contact with national life.

Apart from Laurel and Hardy, whose methods are growing familiar, the comedians have been strangely silent, and we have heard nothing from Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, Jimmy Durante, and the Marx Brothers. There is news, however, of Chaplin. Not only is he making a new film, but he is planning to make a talkie version of *The Woman of Paris* and numerous short films. It is good to know that Chaplin is working again; it will be better when we see the name of his new film in lights above the theatre.

Meanwhile there have been few foreign films. From Germany came *Zwei Menschen*, a tragedy set in the Tyrol, adapted from a novel by Richard Voss and directed by Eric Waschneck. And from from the Soviet studios came *Twenty-Six Commissars*, a historical impression of the Russian revolution as it affected Baku. The latter film has not yet been shown publicly.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII.

Production: London Films. Direction: Alexander Korda. Story and Dialogue: Lajos Biro and Arthur Wimperis. Photography: Georges Périnal. Art Direction: Vincent Korda. With Charles Laughton, Robert Donat, Lady Tree, Binnie Barnes, Elsa Lanchester, Merle Oberon, Franklin Dyall, Wendy Barrie. Distribution: United Artists.

The title is important. When it is not the aim of the film to give an impression of England during the momentous years of the Reformation we cannot find fault with it for not having done so. This is the private life of Henry VIII. It would have been a greater and possibly more memorable achievement had the film attempted to convey England's growing greatness during the Tudor period; but national epics, despite *Cavalcade*, are not always the most profitable box-office propositions, and the lesser and safer task of popular entertainment was preferred. While we may regret the choice in the face of so great an opportunity, we must recognise the film's unqualified success within the limits of its title.

Having elected to entertain rather than to inspire, London Films did not consequently reject sincerity or ignore historical fact. True there are anachronisms and irreverencies which those who like to play the game of catch-as-catch-can will discover; but these are incidentals and do not affect the convincing historical atmosphere of the film. Never do we think of Henry and his Court as mere characters in a charade; and pointed references, among others, to the King's foresight in building a huge fleet for England which was later to triumph over the Armada, and the threat of his revenge on Cromwell following his first meeting with the unattractive Anne of Cleves, keep the historical sense keen. The film is composed chiefly of episodes describing the wooing, wedding, and dismissal of Henry's wives, though it omits Katherine of Aragon whose influence on Henry's life is brushed aside in a sub-title, and it only hints at the important part played by Anne Boleyn. Jane Seymour of whose ignorance Henry is agreeably tolerant; Anne of Cleves whose dowdy, gawky person he acutely dislikes, though he comes later to respect her intelligence; and Katheryn Howard whose youthful beauty attracts him until her deception is proved, are more generously described; and the film concludes with Henry, incredibly transformed from vigorous manhood to senility in a few years, submitting complacently to the nagging and cosseting of Katherine Parr. One of the finest and most revealing moments in the film is his reception of the news of Jane Seymour's death after the birth of Edward VI.

Not surprisingly the film is made memorable by Charles Laughton's

immensely powerful if provocative portrait of Henry. Accurately, I think, he shows the Tudor King to be a man of profound egotism, with personal motives always underlying his public actions, yet with sufficient cunning to stop short of tyranny. It is more the emphasis of the script than of his performance that makes prominent Henry's selfishness, cruelty, ingratitude, and sensuality; and the grossness of the King's manners, though startling to our generation, is doubtless true to the period. Laughton's performance, easily the finest of his brief screen career, dominates the work of an able cast of whom we would like to have seen more: in particular of Merle Oberon as Anne Boleyn, Elsa Lanchester as the Ugly Duchess from Germany, and Robert Donat as Culpeper.

In technique the film is the most polished and workmanlike yet produced in this country. The expert hand of the artist and craftsman is evident everywhere, from the beautiful photography of Périnal to the smallest detail in the costumes designed by John Armstrong. Korda's direction is a remarkable feat of controlled construction. From so many diverse elements he has created a film which, if inevitably episodic in development, has a distinctive and compelling unity. *The Private Life of Henry VIII* gives Korda an assured place among the important directors in contemporary cinema.

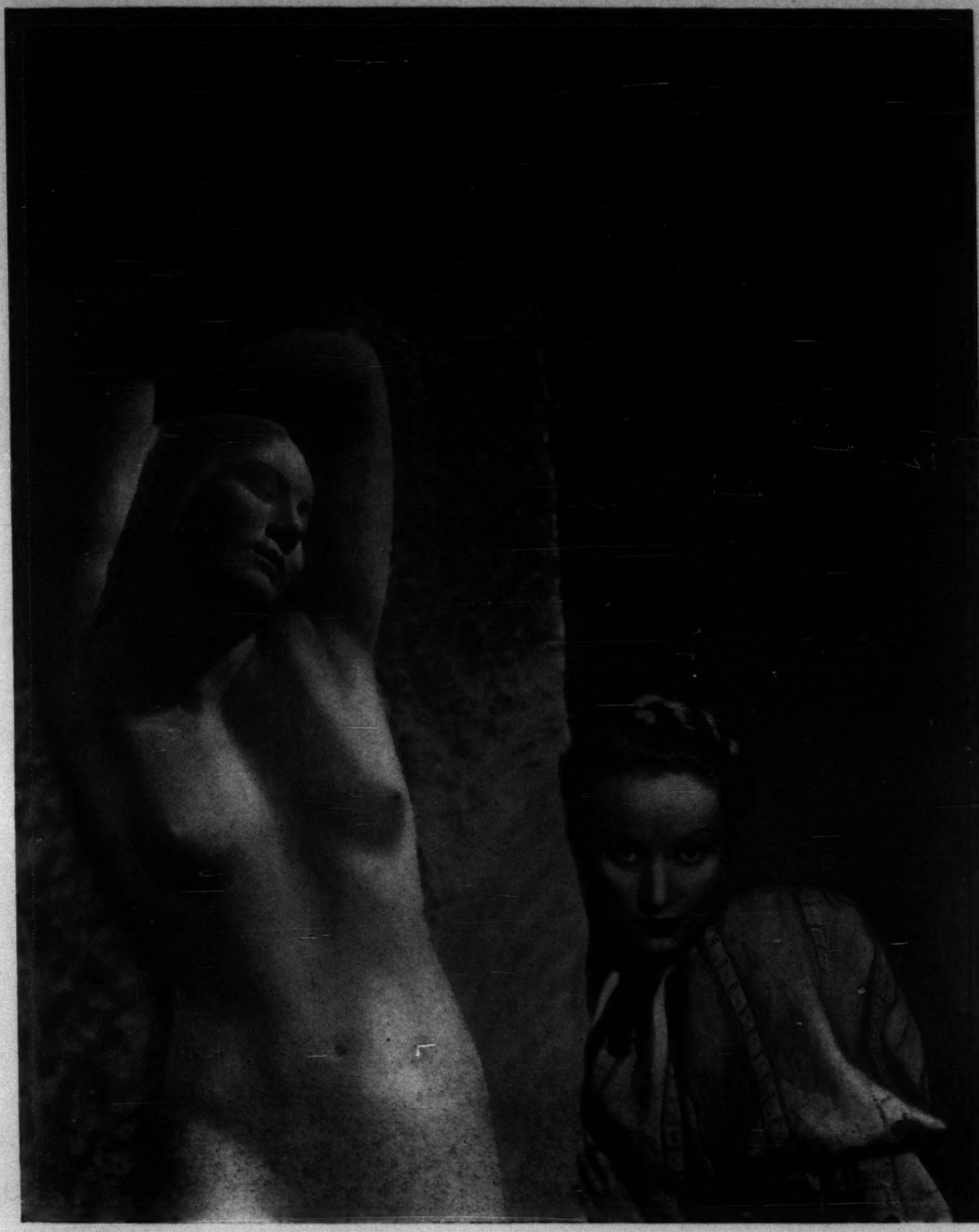
F. H.

I WAS A SPY

Production: Gaumont-British. Direction: Victor Saville. Scenario: W. P. Lipscomb. Photography: Charles van Enger. Art Direction: Alfred Junge. Editing: Fred Smith. With Conrad Veidt, Madeleine Carroll, Herbert Marshall, Gerald du Maurier, Edmund Gwenn, Donald Calthrop.

When a picture evokes almost unanimous praise from the popular writers, I always feel that we should approach the gilded shrine on bended knees. True, Gaumont's new *opus* has not been likened unto a "mountain peak dominating the surrounding landscape," yet I think it might well be described as a bump impeding the traffic of the Strand. We have been asked so many times by our Sunday papers to give the Gaumont boys a big hand that it must have become a habit with we poor writers, but I must confess that Saville's new picture brought me up with a jerk in my seat. Let me describe it.

The story is taken from the adventures of Mlle. Marthe Cnockaert, a Belgian, who nursed German wounded in the small market town of Roulers during 1915, for which duties she was awarded the Iron



Marlene Dietrich as the ingenuous model in "The Song of Songs," a Paramount production, directed by Rouben Mamoulian. Whatever the film's faults—they are largely atoned for by the beautiful photography of Victor Milner.

From "The Rebel," directed by Luis Trenker and Edwin Knopf for Universal. A period film set in the Austrian Tyrol.

Cross. Whilst thus engaged, she was persuaded to undertake espionage work on behalf of the British, causing cylinder dumps to be blown up and sending information which led to Allied aircraft bombing German troops at prayer. At length, her duplicity (or heroism, according to taste) was discovered by the Town Kommandant, but she contrived to avoid the extreme penalty by amazing good fortune. Such is the material from which the film scenario is constructed, with suitable additions in the form of a love-interest and a bawdy week-end at Brussels.

Here we tread carefully. As was expected, there is no attempt to show the unvarnished truth of war nor even its stupidity. The cause of wars is assiduously ignored, and from this view point the picture has no social value. But, acutely self-conscious of his difficult theme, Saville has laid the guilt of war barbarity equally with each conflicting army. The Germans employ poison gas in the field while the British drop bombs on their enemies at prayer. So far, so good. Among the opening titles, however, is a prefatory note by no less a worthy than Winston Churchill, from which we gather that the job of a spy is gallant, courageous, and heroic, enlisting at outset our sympathy for Marthe and "her side." I wonder if that same tribute would have been included had Martha been of English nationality, for only recently it was proclaimed from every rooftop that no Englishman, or was it Briton, could be guilty of espionage. This apart, a final note of patriotism is struck in the closing sequence when the British occupy the evacuated Roulers and Miss Carroll's face lights up with ecstatic joy as the pipers lead the procession. We cry "For England and the Right."

Technically, there is much to offend if reckoning be made of the picture's cost. Saville's camera approach is frank and industrious, the set-ups being chosen on pictorial rather than dramatic context grounds. When his camera drops low, I failed to observe its significance. Admittedly, he has not been aided photographically. The presentation of the Roulers set built at Welwyn Garden City does not do justice to its architect. The long shots are grey and poorly exposed. The marching of troops is dull and repetitive. Of cutting for dramatic import I noticed little, but deplored the constant use of wipe-dissolves to cover the weak continuity. The direction of players seemed uncontrolled. Veidt assumed his usual dominance. Carroll tried bravely, sometimes looked attractive, but broke down before Veidt's superiority. Nevertheless, she remains perhaps England's only intelligent woman star. Marshall was not permitted to forget his canopy value, and the part might well have been given to a lesser-known player. Of the smaller rôles, I have nothing but praise, except that Calthrop's barnstorming methods are becoming tedious.

And so I raise my hat to Gaumont for attempting a film of serious stature, but replace it when I see the spirit in which the deed is done.

PAUL ROTHA.

THE SONG OF SONGS

Production: Paramount. Direction: Rouben Mamoulian. From the play by Edward Sheldon and the novel of Hermann Sudermann. Photography: Victor Milner. With Marlene Dietrich, Brian Aherne, Lionel Atwill, Alison Skipworth. Distribution: Paramount.

Rouben Mamoulian must be one of the most versatile directors at present working in Hollywood. His *Applause* made most of the early back-stage films appear amateurish. *City Streets* saw him give an imaginative account of gangsterdom when the last word appeared to have been said on the gangster. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* made a memorable addition to movie horror. In his last film, ~~*Tell Me To-night*~~, he surprisingly turned his back on realism and successfully created an atmosphere of fantastic romance. Now he has made *The Song of Songs*, a tender, romantic story with not a trace of the satire found in his earlier work. This is not the great film which one day he will make; but the tenderness of the treatment and the depth of understanding revealed make it outstanding.

In its essentials the story is familiar. To quote a trade paper review, it tells of a "young country girl's love for sculptor, her disillusionment, marriage to wealthy Baron, and tragic consequences of meeting with former lover." But under Mamoulian's direction, these familar elements are transformed and the film becomes a sincere and sensitive study of a woman's love and suffering. Through a film whose pictorial composition is consistently lovely there runs a note of symbolism which is most noticeably evident in the climax when the girl, disillusioned, degraded, and her simple faith distorted, smashes the statue made of herself when first she met and fell in love with the sculptor.

In Mamoulian's hands Marlene Dietrich gives the performance of her career, achieving through restraint an impressiveness seldom achieved in her former films. She is here not a vague, glamorous creature, but a woman capable of love and understanding. In comparison, the performances of the others appear dry and spiritless.

F. H.

ZOO IN BUDAPEST

Production: Fox. Supervision: Jesse L. Lasky. Direction: Rowland V. Lee. Photography: Lee Garmes. With Loretta Young, Gene Raymond, and O. P. Heggie. Distribution: Fox.

This is one of the best films to come from Hollywood this year and an indication of new production ideas in the Fox studios in Hollywood.

For about two-thirds of its length the picture has admirable continuity, the three main threads of the boy keeper whose love for animals urges him to steal the furs of women visitors, the orphan girl who escapes, and the little boy who evades his nurse, being introduced, developed, and intertwined with an almost masterly skill. The curve continues in symmetry, with small explosions of suspense, leading up to the theft of another fur and the breakaway of the girl from her companions, followed by a very lovely sequence in the undergrowth beside the lake where the girl crouches, nervous and embarrassed about changing her uniform under the curious eyes of the waterbirds. I cannot recall a scene of such intimacy in which mood and meaning have been so superbly enhanced by photography. Evening falls and mists creep over the lake as the boy keeper and the orphan girl talk to each other for the first time, presently to wade through the water to a disused bear pit. Not until the search for them and the missing little boy is begun is the mood broken and sensationalism lays ugly fingers on the theme in the form of an orgy of broken cages and escaping wild beasts. Delightful romance is twisted into false conclusion when the Rich Man rewards the keeper's heroism by purchasing the orphan's freedom and making him the private keeper of his own luxury zoo. Ethical values are horribly distorted in the usual interests of Big Business.

Garmes' photography envelops most of the footage in a beautiful, sentimental, and almost idyllic quality which marks an advance on the treatment of *Scarface*, *City Streets*, and *Shanghai Express*. His capacity for reflecting the mood of a sequence by lighting and camera movement and his acute sensitivity to textures are, next to the continuity, the real importance of the picture. The treatment of the love scene beside the lake with its setting of pampas plumes and silently gliding birds will certainly remain in the memory, and ranks superior to his love scene by the waves in *City Streets*. Grand close-ups of animals are seen from the camera and not the human point of view.

Roland Lee's direction has a tenderness and attention to detail hard to reconcile with his earlier work. What share Lee played in

the script is difficult to assess, but there are several touches which merit praise and the simple dialogue is used with such economy that the film might well have been made without it. On the other hand, music forms an important environment to the theme and has been well prepared in relation to the changing moods. Once again Loretta Young provides the most perfect photographic face on the screen and Garmes has given her full value. Gene Raymond plays well and freshly against Heggie's nicely handled Professor, while the minor character parts are mostly overplayed for comedy. Despite its defects, the picture stands well in the memory.

P. R.

THE REBEL

Production: Universal. Direction: Luis Trenker and Edwin Knopf. Scenario: Luis Trenker. Photography: Sepp Allgeier, Willi Goldberger, and Albert Bernitz. With Luis Trenker, Vilma Banky, and Victor Varconi. Distribution: Universal.

This new avalanche effort may be bracketed with *The Doomed Battalion* as an offshoot of the *Pitz Palu* and *Blue Light* college of Alpine endeavour. At its London showing the photography came in for a special Press mention, by which you may understand that it is largely of the backlit variety and heavy over-correction which grows tiresome by repetition. Subject in this case is period, a sort of Sabatini-cum-Farnol affair with the familiar rebel student and the ringleted blonde, supposedly in Austria when Napoleon's army was in residence. There are two good hearty chases in the Western style and an ending which probably is original—the letting loose of huge avalanches of stone and timber on to the French army which is passing below at the bottom of the gorge. The picture is built round this idea. As a director of imagination, Trenker is obviously unfamiliar with his job and is hardly more than amateurishly capable as the hero. Presumably the exteriors are authentic and the recording and interiors Hollywood. There is a concluding shot in the real Laemmle tradition in which the souls of the three martyred rebels rise from their dead bodies and go marching into the sky.

P. R.

CONTACT

Production: British Instructional. Direction: Paul Rotha. Distribution: Wardour.

THIS DESCRIPTION of Imperial Airways is Rotha's first film, and shows him more mature in criticism than in production. The film is never quite permitted to get under way. Always the critical mind of Rotha seems to be jibbing and hedging and taking care lest the mistakes he has recognised in others' work appear to damn his own. The photography is too careful, the editing too studied, and sequences of the film too altogether cerebral. A careless rapture or two would have made his aeroplanes fly higher and faster, would have supplied a necessary breeze to his photography, and made the contact between continents warmer and more exciting. These criticisms are noted only because Rotha is coming into the first line of documentary and calls for all the heavy weather we can make for him. Even if the photography were not as beautiful as it is, the size and scope of *Contact* would make it of first importance in this year's documentary account. The trouble with Rotha is that he doesn't think about cinema (like Eisenstein), nor does he patently enjoy making it (like Elton): he worries about it. If, in his next, he forgets half of what he knows, doesn't care much about the other half, and sets out to enjoy his material as well as shoot it, he will do something very exciting indeed.

J. G.

WORTH NOTING

TUGBOAT ANNIE.—The comedy mixture and rough-hearted team which delighted millions in *Min and Bill* will again delight millions with a repetition of their world-famous arguments. Once again Marie Dressler cusses to hide the sniffs and Wallace Beery mutters in his sepulchral boots. They are inimitable. Again it's on the waterfront, but this time they run a tugboat, and there's a son who does proud by his fond parents and becomes a ship's captain. In addition, there is a last-minute rescue at sea. In other words, all the old ingredients that bring a laugh and a choke and masquerade under the label of entertainment. It is a pity, because troupers like Beery and Dressler do this sort of hokum standing on their heads, and Mervyn LeRoy knows his angles too well to waste his time on such trivialities. The slowness of the opening reel is appalling and the subsequent repetition of situations tends to precipitate an early departure. But it is worth staying if only to see Beery's heroic

exploit (I am not sure exactly what he does) which is very well staged. As with most M.G.M. pictures, there is too much Dunning intermixed with authentic photography, and the length needs trimming by at least a third to keep its pace. P. R.

THE STRANGER'S RETURN.—This corn-belt epic is an important contribution to a real movie renaissance that is taking place in American cinema. Such films as *State Fair*, *The Man Who Dared*, and *The Stranger's Return* are shaping a naturalistic movie. We can forgive the tradition of movie dramatic values that has ruined the story, and the introduction of Miriam Hopkins, for the real virtue of attempting to record the people of the Middle West. King Vidor has controlled the mannerisms of the stars to this purpose, and despite the false notes in the story, Lionel Barrymore's patriarch is a sound piece of character drawing. *The Stranger's Return* is a sincere attempt to portray the lives of normal people, but box-office values and movie traditions have been too strong for the director. The old symbolism of Vidor is here, but he is not the man who directed *The Crowd*. The racket has been too tough for him. The value of this film is the courage of the producers in choosing a social theme. It is a real victory when Hollywood deserts the plaster walls for the fields and homes of Iowa. D. F. TAYLOR.

BITTER SWEET.—The film demonstrates more clearly than the play that Noel Coward had little art to prostitute. Ideas and ideals are both cheap and tawdry. As an example of direction before the sound camera escaped from the camera booth it is excellent. Songs are sustained on one set-up for the complete tune, and a variation on long shot and close-up is even denied us. But the settings and photography do deserve praise. Fred Young's camera work is comparable to that of Lee Garmes in its velvety blacks and graduated half-tones. Particularly noteworthy is the delightful lighting of faces. Sets (L. P. Williams) and costumes (Doris Zinkeisen) are lovely in their suggestion and reveal a very close co-operation between art director and cameraman. For the definitely imaginative camera work and setting *Bitter Sweet* marks a real advance on anything yet produced in England. D. F. T.

TWENTY-SIX COMMISSARS.—This belongs to the historical school of Soviet films, and in subject and technique may be classified with *The End of St. Petersburgh*, *Ten Days*, and *Potemkin*. Against a background of oil derricks and sand dunes, the film tells of the

revolution in Baku, the British intervention, the arrest and murder of the twenty-six leaders of the Baku Soviet. This, unfortunately, is a silent film, for the first two reels, at least, lend themselves to dialogue treatment. These two reels are interior shots of a meeting where the conflicting tendencies of the people towards the intervention find expression. The sequence is shot with considerable imagination, but titles are insufficient. Later, when action replaces talk, the absence of dialogue is welcome. The drama moves along swiftly, unhampered by that microphone consciousness which still seems to paralyse some Soviet directors.

Two other sequences are notable—a civil riot building up from the smallest of incidents, and the final massacre of the commissars in the desert—a sequence which is handled with a real feeling for the drama of the event. The utter callousness of the massacre is equalled by the quiet stoicism of the revolutionaries.

Twenty-six Commissars was directed by Shengelaya. His selection of types is superb. So also is the camera work. The censor will never allow this film to be publicly exhibited in Britain, although it is true. Film societies ought to show it. RALPH BOND.

SPRING ON THE FARM.—This background educational film, produced by the E.M.B. Film Unit and directed by Evelyn Spice, is a good journalistic account of Spring. Cut and designed for children, it is naturally slow in tempo, though the numbers of young animals will stir the fundamental sentimentalisms of English and Scots in any cinema. Photography is notably competent, and shows that there is as much value in a white sky as in blue sky with cumulus clouds.

D. F. T.

MICKEY'S GALA PREMIÈRE.—In a Miscellany note in the summer number I suggested that the drawn film was capable of much wider development and that it might easily be used as a medium for caricature. As if in illustration of the suggestion, Walt Disney has made this burlesque of a Hollywood première in which he introduces caricatures of the stars. Mischievously but not bitterly, he pictures the people of the studios—Greta Garbo, Douglas Fairbanks, Chaplin, Marie Dressler, the Barrymores and the rest—and subtly satirises their peculiarities as they react variously to Mickey's antics on the screen. Disney is one of the few really individual artists in films, and his work is nearer to cinema proper than that of most orthodox directors. His break into caricature is further proof of his brilliantly imaginative mind and his devotion to the cause of development through experiment.

F. H.

FILM SOCIETIES

OXFORD UNIVERSITY FILM SOCIETY

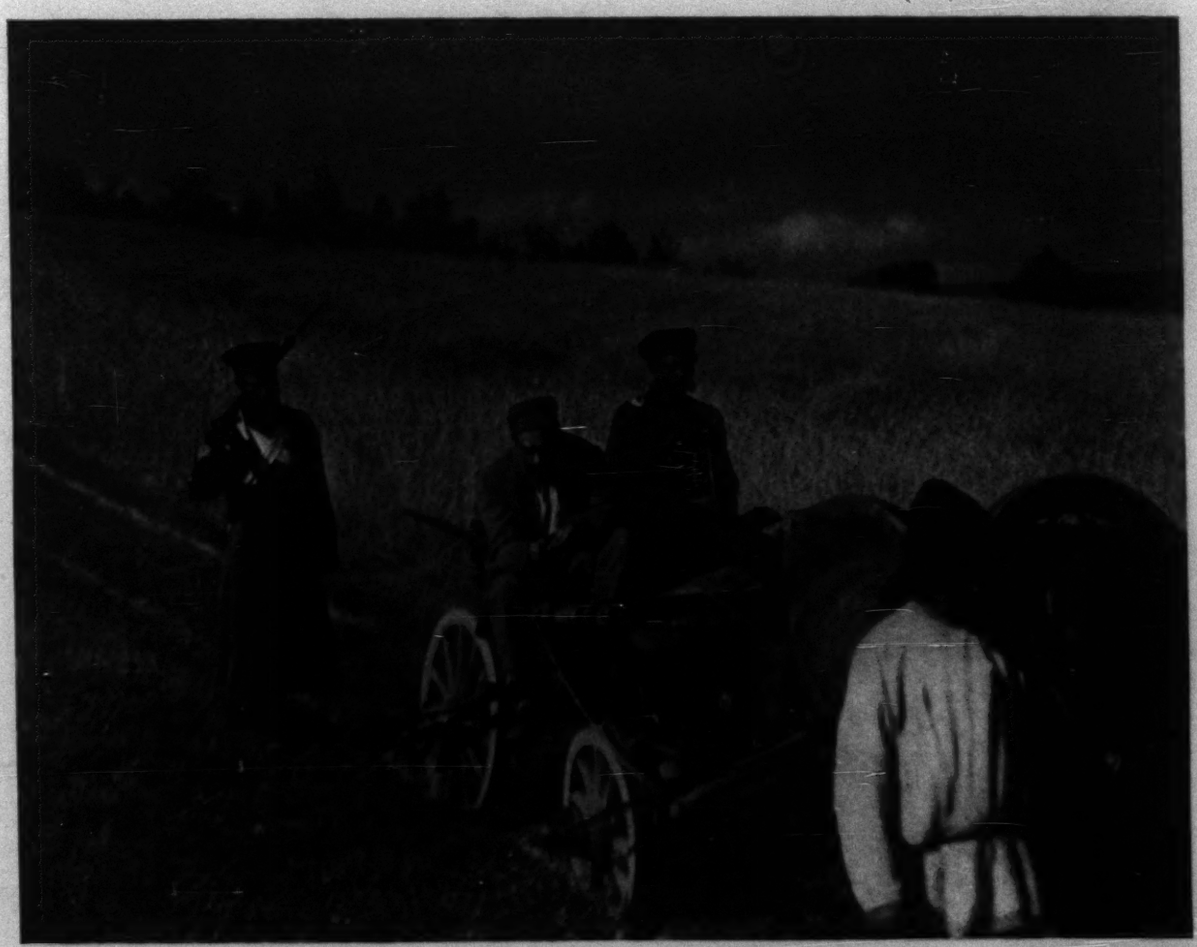
The Society owes a debt of gratitude both for its origin and for its present flourishing condition to its founders, Hugh Carleton Greene and James Gibson. In January 1931 they obtained from the University Proctors permission (hitherto withheld) to start a film society on the condition that they did not attempt to make films themselves. Since that time the Society has continued to hold twelve meetings a year, or four a term.

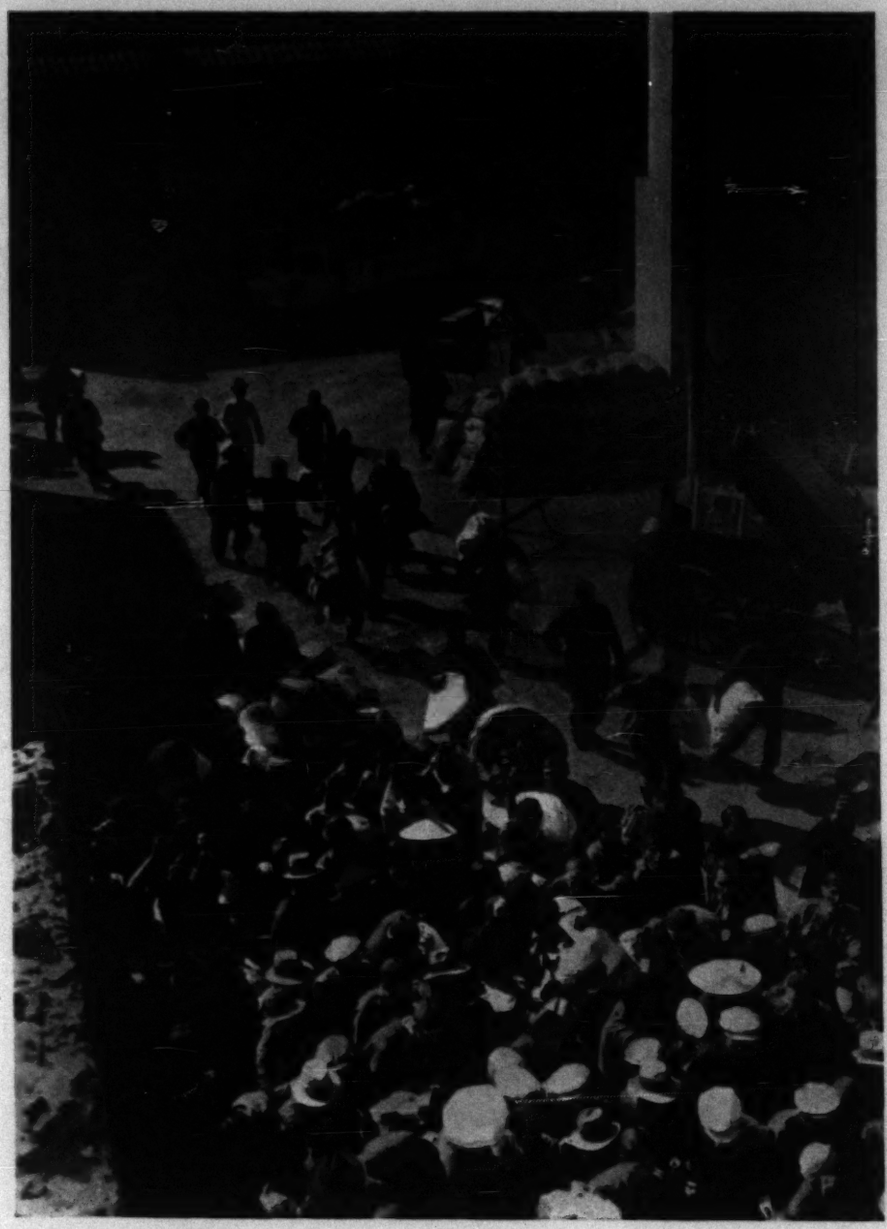
Meetings are held on Sundays, and do much to enliven the deadness of Sunday evenings. A drawback to this is the difficulty of fixing up a programme which shall last exactly two hours; but since meetings continue during the Trinity term we are perhaps the only Society that does not have a "season," but shows films throughout the year. That this policy is in the circumstances a sound one is proved by the fact that there is very little fluctuation in the Society's strength, which has since the beginning remained pretty steadily in the region of three hundred members.

The first, and to those original members who saw it perhaps the most unforgettable programme, was shown in the local Masonic Hall, and consisted of *The Seashell and The Clergyman*, Chaplin's *Fatal Mallet*, and *The Battleship Potemkin*. A promising start, especially in view of the fact that *The Seashell* aroused such a controversy and remained the subject of such heated conversation during the fortnight intervening between that meeting and the next, that it must have contributed invaluably to the encouragement of hesitating prospective members.

They certainly needed encouragement. For a whole term we endured the discomforts of small hard chairs and the inconveniences of a single more or less silent projector accompanied by a gramophone which would keep running down. But the pioneer spirit wanes in Oxford as swiftly as it waxes, and it is doubtful if even the continued

From "The House of Death" a Moschrabpom - Film production (U.S.S.R.), directed by W. F. Federow, depicting the career and banishment of Feodor Dostoevski under Nicholas I., the part of Dostoevski is taken by Chmelioff of the Moscow Arts Theatre.





From "Fugitives," a Ufa film made under the new Stapenhorst regime. Directed by Gustav Ucicky, it deals with the exodus of the Volga Germans during the Russian Revolution. The cast includes Hans Albers and Kathe von Nagy.

excellence of those first programmes—*The Student of Prague*, *Faust*, *Bed and Sofa*—would have been able to preserve the life of the young Society but for its transference at the first meeting of the next term from the barren Hall into a comfortable cinema. The Electra Palace had been newly equipped for sound and the Society soon celebrated its removal by showing talkies. A memorable evening was one of the hottest of the summer of 1931 on which *Hallelujah* was shown.

Since then it has been the Society's policy to procure the latest continental productions as soon as they become available, and to vary them with an occasional outstanding film of the silent period. *Turksib*, *Earth*, *The Ghost that Never Returns*, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Caligari*, and *The Italian Straw Hat* fairly represent our programmes in the silent class; and *Quick Millions*, *Princess à Vos Ordres*, *The Murder of Karamazov*, *En Natt*, and *Maedchen in Uniform* in the other.

The Society does not interest itself very deeply in the theoretical side of the cinema. In fact, the only speaker who has so far visited us is Anthony Asquith, who at the second meeting gave us some of his ideas on the use of sound.

Last term, the officers were fortunate in bringing off a unique coup by showing *Paris Méditerranée* almost the moment it was landed in this country. Certainly they can claim to be the first to put the film through an English projector. With this as their final bow, Mr. Greene and Mr. Gibson put an end to the first and most encouraging stage of the Society's life by resigning their respective offices of President and Secretary, and thus give us leave to sign ourselves in their place.

B. H. de C. Ireland.
A. D. Woozley.

The Film Society, London, has decided to extend the rate of subscription, hitherto available only to film technicians employed at a salary not exceeding £10, to all students of accredited educational institutions who are over sixteen years of age. The new rate is 15s., including tax. Events on the continent have complicated the work of selecting the films to be shown this season, but among the films from which a final selection will be made are: *The Deserter*, *Ivan*, *Komsomol*, *Twenty-Six Commissars*, *An American Tragedy*, *Blackshirts*, *La Maternelle*, *Anna and Elizabeth*, *S.A.—Mann Brand*. Application for membership should be made to Miss J. M. Harvey, 56 Manchester Street, London, W.1.

BIRMINGHAM FILM SOCIETY hopes to have another successful season. The Hon. Secretary is S. G. Hawes, 163 Pershore Road, Birmingham, 5. Performances will be held in the Scala Cinema and the subscription is 10s. 6d.

CHESHIRE FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. Miss Diana Baerlin, Whatcroft Hall, Northwich, Cheshire), commenced its season on 14th September with *Bluebottles*, *The Spider and the Fly*, and *War is Hell*. Eight monthly performances are to be given on Sundays at the Plaza, Northwich.

CROYDON FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. R. H. Muxlow, 16 Northampton Road, Croydon). Monthly performances are to be held on Sunday afternoons in the Picture House, North End. The subscription is 17s. 6d. An inaugural meeting on 22nd October will be addressed by Anthony Asquith and Paul Rotha.

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD (17 South St. Andrew Street, Edinburgh, 2). Victor Saville opens the new season with an address on 16th October and the first performance will be given on Sunday, 29th October, when *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick* will be shown.

GLASGOW FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2). Cranston's, a still larger cinema, has been booked for this season, which opens on 15th October with *The Virtuous Isadore*. Victor Saville will be present at this meeting and will address the Society.

LEEDS FILM GROUP (Hon. Sec. Jackson Braham, 43 Mexborough Drive, Leeds, 7). With already two successful seasons to its credit this Society hopes to remove shortly from its present private theatre, which seats only one hundred, to larger premises. During the summer months it has shown *The Girl in the Moon*, *Nina Petrovna*, and *Turksib*. Discussions and meetings for lectures are held periodically. The Group is also building up a library of film literature and has commenced an indexed information bureau.

LEICESTER FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. E. Irving Richards, Vaughan College, Leicester). Two performances are held on Saturday evenings once a month, the subscription being 10s. 6d. for the 8.15 performance and 7s. 6d. for the 6 p.m. performance. The first show will be given on 21st October when it is hoped to screen *Der Hauptmann von Kopenick*. Arrangements have been made with John Grierson to give a course of lectures on "The Art of Cinema and its Social Relationships."

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY (69 Liverpool Street, Salford). Performances in future will be given in the Rivoli, Rusholme, on Saturdays at 4 p.m. The first show of the season was given on 23rd September, when *En Natt*, *Voice of the World*, and *Technocracy* were included in the programme. The subscription is 10s.

OXFORD CITY FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. Mrs. Hilda Harrisson, Sandlands, Boars Hill, Oxford). The first exhibition of this new society will be given early in November. The subscription for eight Sunday performances will be 10s.

WEST HAM FILM SOCIETY (Hon. Sec. Arthur L. Watson, 9 First Avenue, Plaistow). In course of organisation this new society, which will be run on lines similar to others throughout the country, should draw a large membership from the populous district it will serve.

B.H.F.S. (Hon. Sec. M. Hatzfeld, 42 Windermere Avenue, Brondesbury, London, N.W.6). Another new society, with a cryptic name, which intends to give a season of four performances with two subscriptions, 10s. and 5s. 6d. Among the films it is hoped to show are: *The Girl in the Moon*, *City of Song*, *The Wonderful Lie*, *Hungarian Rhapsody*, and *Murder*.

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY. Arrangements for the season include the showing of *Don Quixote*, *Contact* and other films, a lecture by Paul Rotha, an exhibition of stills and an amateur film competition. Further developments of the Society include the arranging of children's matinees, the formation of a film club, and the encouragement of production groups. The Bishop of Liverpool is President and the Hon. Treasurer is Ingram Knowles, District Bank, Port Sunlight.

LINCOLN. Frank Carlill, 84 Ruskin Avenue, Lincoln, is endeavouring to form a local film society and would welcome inquiries and support.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION in Great Britain has appointed David F. Ritchie special Cinema Representative. Lists of recommended films are sent periodically to members, and in districts where there is a film society local branches are advised to enter into close co-operation.

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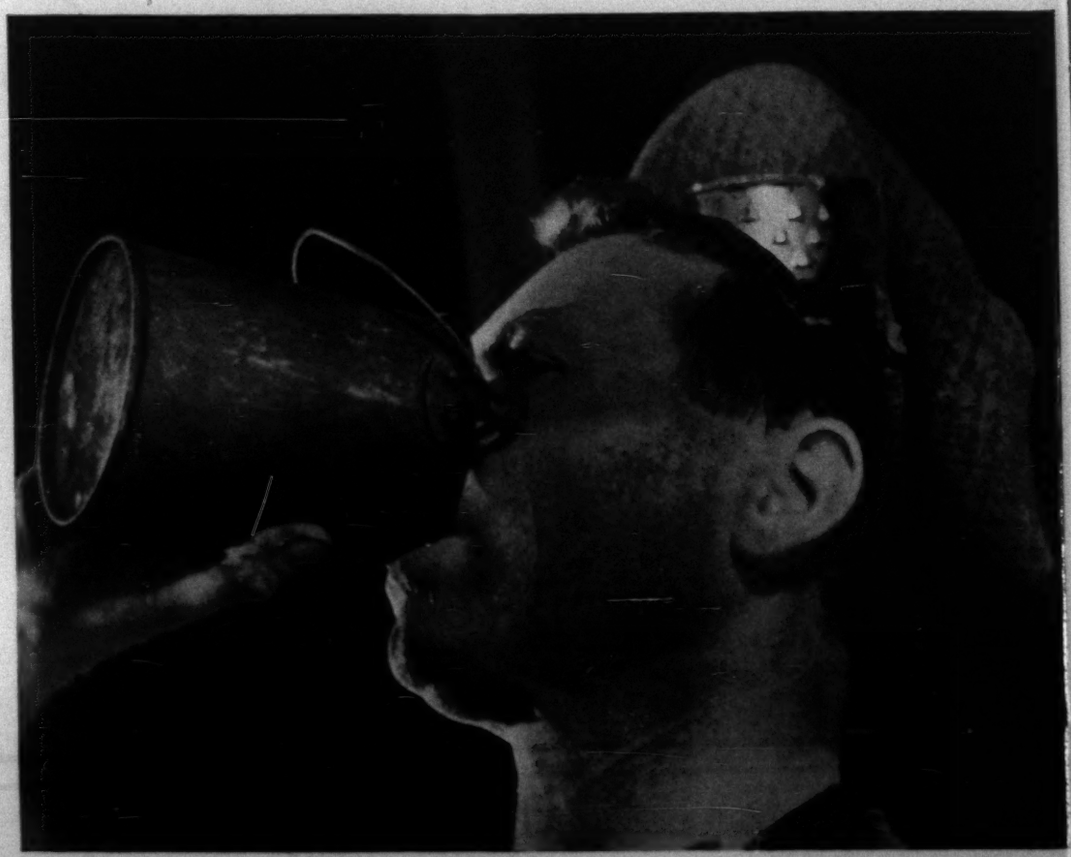
Conrad Veidt in "I was a Spy," a Gaumont British production, directed by Victor Saville.

Two films directed by Paul Rotha. Above from "Contact," the British Instructional film of Imperial Airways.

Below, from "Roadwards," the Daimler car film produced by British Independent Productions.



LONDON FILMS

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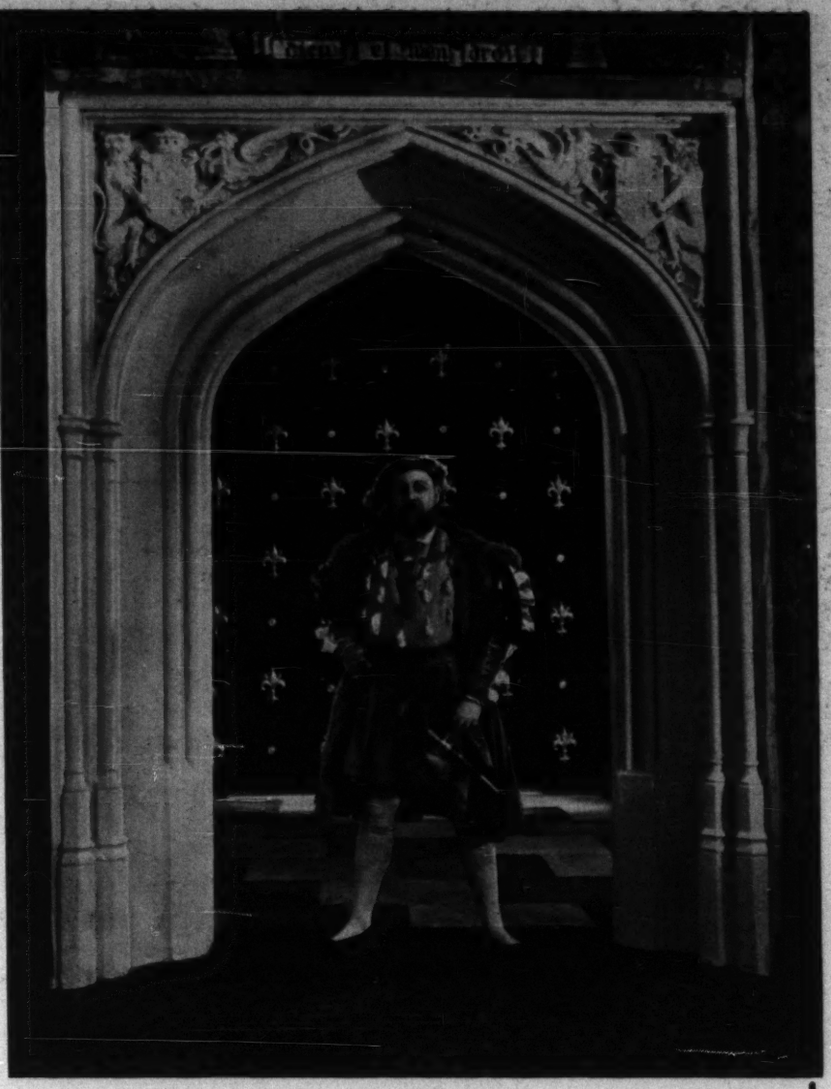

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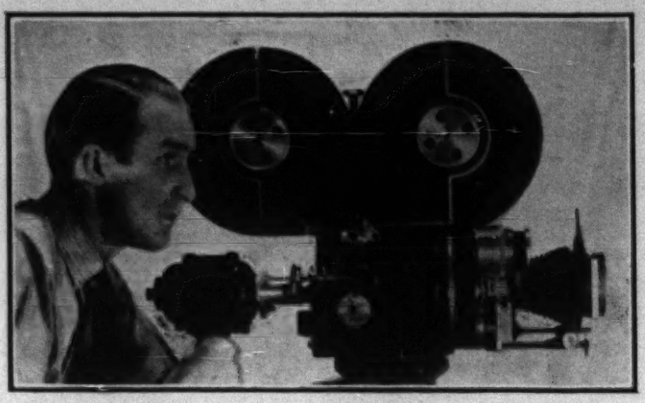

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THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKER

NO MORE FILM PLAYS!

ERIC M. KNIGHT

AFTER many years of writing on cinema I have begun to despair of revolt against screen-pap coming from within the industry itself. I consider Hollywood and recall the broken hopes of Eisenstein, Stiller, Murnau, Flaherty, Dudley Murphy, and the other able men who were battered by the system there.

The crystallization of the film method must come from outside commercial ranks. More and more I am convinced that the 16 mm. film is the avenue to progress.

The tremendous cost of modern tone-film production raises an insurmountable barrier before the young would-be creator in celluloid. But the sub-calibre film offers him an inexpensive field in which to work.

The amazing lack of good sub-calibre film work is not due, as is commonly supposed, to the machines now available. I find it due almost solely to lack of imagination on the part of the workmen in the narrow-film field. Give a cinema group a supply of film stock and usually it will try to produce a "play" in imitation of Hollywood. If the world didn't produce another film-play for five years we'd still be over-supplied. Shoot sonatas of leaves and grass, tone-poems of clouds and water, gavottes in abstract shape, documentaries of the machines you toil at and the land you live in! But don't shoot a play!

The greatest need, as I see it, for progress in the narrow-film field, is for greater technical knowledge on the part of the creator. Generally the artist detests anything that smacks of figures and tables; yet cinema is art-through-machine and it must be studied. You may have the finely sensitive eye that can see a camera-angle, frame a composition, see the delight of splashed sunlight and half-lit shadows; but that's only the beginning. If you won't learn to use a

photometer, to set the right stop, to handle your filters, you'd better go back to pencil-sketching.

In fact, the best workman will go beyond his needs and will start at once to do his own laboratory work. For the one great drawback of the sub-calibre film at this time is the use of reversal stock—*i.e.*, stock that is developed by the film maker into a positive. You send the exposed film back to the maker. In some factories your film is machine-developed—by a machine that automatically labours to iron out all the fades that you slaved to get.

To record on negative stock, to develop and print it yourself, immediately makes your medium flexible; the grace of dissolves, superimpositions, the entire possibilities of montage, are then available. Under these conditions the rank amateurishness of the sub-calibre film disappears, and in truth you can attain all the technical perfection of the standard film of commercial cinema—and even more.

The sub-calibre film as a field for the film-artist is now being enriched by the 16 mm. sound-cameras.

Two years ago the American Society of Motion Picture Engineers declared publicly that 16 mm. sound-on-film was impossible. Recently I made a film with the "impossible" camera created by RCA-Victor. Still in the experimental stage at that time, still full of many "bugs," the camera could fulfil its major destiny: it could record sound with all the fidelity of any ten thousand dollar Hollywood apparatus. Speech recorded perfectly; music recordings were surpassed only by the lately developed "High Fidelity" and "Wide Range" systems now used in Hollywood, which record overtones in the extremely high and extremely low cycles.

The only drawback to the coming sound cameras in the narrow-film field is lack of flexibility. They are produced for the amateur who wants to take a picture of little Nancy singing "Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows." Recording again is on the rigid reversal film stock, and there is no means of post-synchronization of sound. In other words, it is a talkie-camera—and what the film-creator needs is a tone-film camera; one that records on negative stock and which will thus allow all conceivable variations of sight-images and sound-images that are corelated at the desire of the artist in the printing.

Possibly the construction of such cameras must be worked out by ingenious amateurs who will guide the mass-production men much as radio amateurs were always far ahead of the industrial radio-builders in the earlier days of development.

But whether in sound or in silence, the narrow film field offers a chance to those young men who groan at the vulgarity and artistic sterility of the movie industry's product.

There are clubs, schools, and homes, all with 16 mm. projectors. The present supply of 16 mm. films is pretty poor, and I see no great reason for making those projectors grind merrily. There are reissues of Hollywood films in stock at movie camera stores—if that cheers you up. But, apart from the remarkable *Fall of the House of Usher*, I know of no sub-calibre film that is worth showing twice.

The would-be film creator on both sides of the Atlantic would do well to bottle up the energy now expended on impotent hate of Hollywood and its screen lollipops. That energy could be better expended upon production of good sub-calibre films; in formation of a central bureau to distribute such pictures to the clubs, schools, and homes that need them. Thus the public, fed for years on the dope of sex-stories, could be made to realise that the screen can give us something far more stirring and vital than *Cocktail Hour* or *Gold Diggers of* 1933.

AMATEUR PRODUCTION IN IRELAND

DUBLIN—traditionally one of the intellectual centres of the British Isles—has, up to the present, held itself aloof from films. It is true that Dublin goes to the pictures more than almost any other city of its size, and the Dublin audiences are notoriously critical, especially of acting. Nevertheless, intellectual Dublin occupies itself with other things, and hardly knows that the cinema claims a place among the arts.

Recently, however, there have been signs of a changed attitude, and a few films have been made by amateurs—notably *By Accident*, which was composed and directed by J. N. G. Davidson. The latest and most promising of these, at present in course of production, is *Guests of the Nation*, from Frank O'Connor's book of the same name, dealing with the Anglo-Irish War of 1922. It is directed by Denis Johnston ("E. W. Tocher") the author of several interesting and original plays. The scenario applies a technique modelled on the classical Russian style to a subject for which it is perfectly suited. In particular, its continuity (the bugbear of the amateur) is surprisingly mature. The cast is drawn largely from the experienced personnel of the Dublin Gate Theatre Company. Assistance given by the Saorstat Government has included the loan of two armoured cars and an empty police barracks. The production is arousing considerable interest, and, whether it succeeds or fails artistically, will undoubtedly stimulate others to make use of the material which lies ready to hand in such abundance.

G. F. D.

TWO INDUSTRIAL FILMS

ROADWAYS.—*Direction: Paul Rotha. Photography: Jack Parker. Produced by Paul Rotha for the B.S.A. and Daimler Companies under the supervision of Western Electric.* HUMBER-HILLMAN.—*Direction: Jack B. Holmes. Photography: Jimmy Rogers. Produced by Steuart Films for the Humber-Hillman Car Company.*

TOGETHER these two films indicate a new spirit in advertising films. They are directed with sincerity, a rare thing in this side of the business. In common with all advertising films they suffer from concessions made to the advertiser. For instance, Rotha's film shows every process in the Daimler works, thus leaving little space for emphasis or construction within the limits of his two reels; while Holmes has had to omit the final assembly of cars and jump straight into the open road from the chassis assembly in order that the film should be perennially useful to his advertiser, that is to say, so that the advertiser can tack on shots of his new models each year. Both films are concerned with motor car manufacture, but the virtues of one are by no means the virtues of the other.

Roadwards has two themes. First there is the story of the country and industry linked by roads and the factory providing the means of getting to the country; and secondly, more importantly, there is the story of the workmen who make the cars, the workers behind the machine. For the first time we have a commercial advertising film interested in humanities. The most significant sequence in the film is in the smithy, the drop-hammer forging, where Rotha has enlarged on the process, creating imaginatively and not hurrying on to the next stage. The fault of the whole film is the snip-snap from one process to another that makes the film run instead of marching and building. It constitutes, however, a real advance on *Contact*, there being a greater appreciation of movie values, though the drop-hammer forging sequence is the only one in which Rotha has given himself a chance to construct. Pictorially the film is full of good looks, the lighting of factory processes being imaginative and controlled.

Jack Holmes' picture is a solid initial job, but he is yet to master the whole bag of movie tricks. To advance in documentary he must learn to build upon themes. He must be more interested in the man behind the machine, in the internal aspect rather than the external. On the whole his film has been more thought out than Rotha's, but his form approximates too closely to symphonics (*vide* John Grierson, *Cinema Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 2). It is not enough to hang your film on the idea of the song of the wheel. *Humber-*

Hillman is homogenous, and the opening into the factory has a very happy smoothness. Photography is standard; that is to say, it is uninspired, it gives no value to the machine. Holmes is content to flat-light a subject, intent on just lighting, not on creating a mood or effect to reveal some new aspect of his subject. This leads him into an inability to seize the significant detail in a process. His faults will be overcome with a closer acquaintance with the medium.

Both films should be noted as the beginning of a new attitude to advertising films.

DONALD FRASER.

NEWS REEL

ACCORDING to reports emanating from New York, says the *American Cinematographer*, there is in formation a corporation for the furnishing of 16 mm. sound pictures to approximately two thousand theatres now closed. The plan calls for portable projectors with a complete programme on a four-thousand-feet reel, consisting of feature, cartoon, and travelogue. It is anticipated a show of this nature will call for a rental of from ten to twenty dollars.

It is the contention that these 16 mm. programmes will not interfere with the professional-sized pictures, and that negotiations are going on with Paramount and Fox for releases.

AN EXPERIMENT in providing films suitable for children in villages where there are no cinemas has recently been made by B. D. Margerison, of Bradford, at Northewram in Yorkshire. A two hours' performance, given in the schoolroom, included travel and instructional films and two comedies, all on 16 mm. stock (silent). Admission charges were 2d. and 4d. for children and 6d. for adults. If sufficient support is forthcoming it is hoped to make a regular round of villages, visiting them weekly or fortnightly.

A RECORD of the Everest Expedition, made by Wyn Harris, who had no previous film experience, has been produced with a £40 Kodak camera. The film, which lasts for seventy-five minutes, is a valuable document, and as the 16 mm. stock on which it was made cost only £30 it should do much to encourage amateur production when it comes to be publicly shown.

THE AIMS of the Socalist Film Council, London, is to produce for the Labour Movement 16 mm. films of propaganda value. Its first film, *The Road to Hell*, directed by Rudolph Messel, is reviewed in this issue. *What the News Reel Doesn't Show*, its second film, shows

work on the Five-Year Plan in Russia. These films are silent, but the next production, an anti-war film, will be a talkie. The personnel of the Council includes Rudolph Messel, Terence Greenidge, Raymond Postgate and Naomi Mitchison.

RECENT additions to the Pathéscope 9·5 mm. library include Arthur Robinson's *The Informer*, Chaplin's *The Count*, and Fritz Lang's *The Spy*. The famous Ufa film *Faust* will be added shortly.

THE NEW advertising films for the Morris Car Company have been produced by the company's own unit, most of whom have other jobs in the works at Cowley. Six talkies have now been completed and will be shown throughout the country by four travelling projector units.

TWO NEW books published by Pitman contain much practical information of a technical nature for the amateur. "Commercial Cinematography," by George H. Sewell (7s. 6d.), deals with the sub-standard film for those who wish to make personal films of their own business undertakings, and "Amateur Talking Pictures and Recording," by Bernard Brown (7s. 6d.), describes and examines the various equipments now available for making sound films.

SOCIETIES and schools using 9·5 mm. films will find the new Pathéscope 200B projector worth inspection. With a 200-watts lamp and powerful lenses it gives an excellently clear picture ten feet wide.

THE SCENARIO Service, formerly conducted by *Cinema Quarterly*, has now been taken over by the Independent Film-makers Association. Will subscribers who still have MSS. which they do not intend to use, please return them immediately?

MOBILE PRODUCTION UNIT

A NEW service which should interest independent film-makers is the mobile production unit belonging to Photographic Art Productions. The unit is entirely self-contained and may be used either for studio or location work. Provision is made to accommodate up to nine mute cameras. Condenser microphones are used, and the truck is provided with cables which can operate up to 200 feet from the microphones. The truck and crew, including cameraman and recording engineer, may be hired per day or week, and a studio in Wardour Street is available for post-synchronising and interior work. If it were more generally known that facilities of this sort are available independent and amateur producers might be encouraged to embark on more ambitious productions.

THE ROAD TO HELL

Production: Socialist Film Council. Direction and Photography: Rudolph Messel. With Naomi Mitchison, Terence Greenidge, Raymond Postgate, Ian Fox.

To start with let me cast a large and heavy brickbat at this production. It alleges to be propaganda against the Means Test. If it is propaganda for anything it is propaganda for the worst type of defeatism. If the working classes of England behave as the particular family in this film does under the pressure of bad government and worse administration, there is no hope for anyone, and the Bishop of Durham is right.

Passing, however, to technicalities this production (sixteen mm., amateur throughout, cost £66) is a first-class object lesson to every film group or independent amateur in the country. It is well constructed, well acted, well cut, well lit, and well directed. It has economy of movement and largesse of effect. And incidentally it introduces a fine movie-actor—Terence Greenidge.

Film groups, please see this film and learn something from Messel's work.

B. W.

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Advisers:
ANTHONY ASQUITH ANDREW BUCHANAN
JOHN GRIERSON STUART LEGG
PAUL ROTHA BASIL WRIGHT
ALAN HARPER (Sub-Standard Apparatus)

THE INDEPENDENT FILM-MAKERS ASSOCIATION has been formed to bring together and assist those who are interested in the production of Documentary, Experimental, and Educational films.

CO-OPERATIVE EFFORT

The Association will put members in touch with each other and where practicable will arrange that several members, though living in different parts of the country, may work together as a unit on one film. In suitable centres autonomous groups will be formed so that by pooling their resources members may be able to widen the scope of their activities and even set up collective studios.

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

The Advisers of the Association are at all times prepared to place their expert knowledge at the disposal of members. Advice on production, on the preparation of scenarios, on treatment, photography, editing and every aspect of film-making is available on application, in the first instance, to the Hon. Secretary.

REVIEWS OF FILMS

Certain of the Advisers have agreed to review members' films and to give constructive criticism either privately or in the official organ of the Association.

FILM EXCHANGE

A catalogue of films made by members will be prepared and circulated. A suitable rental will be charged to non-members. Where possible the Association will endeavour to find a market for the production of its members.

SCENARIO SERVICE

Scenarios which meet the requirements of the objects of the Association may be entered in the Scenario Service. Manuscripts will be available for production by members free of charge, but suitable fees will be asked from non-members. A list of themes and subjects required by commercial firms and educational organizations will be circulated to members.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

A private Bulletin will be issued to members periodically. This will contain the names and addresses of all members as enrolled and confidential information regarding the various activities of the Association.

SUMMER SCHOOL

It is proposed to hold each year at least one Summer Production School at which prominent directors and experts will give practical instruction in different branches of film-making. From time to time it is also intended to arrange demonstrations of apparatus and exhibitions of films.

OFFICIAL ORGAN

The official organ of the Association is CINEMA QUARTERLY which will contain in each issue a special section devoted to the activities of the Independent Film-Makers. CINEMA QUARTERLY will be posted free to members on publication.

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